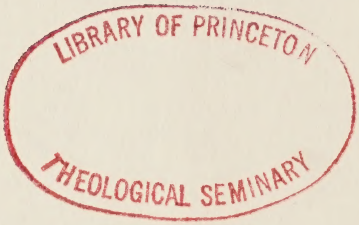

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FORGIVENESS

Decisive Issue in Protestant Thought

FORGIVENESS

DECISIVE ISSUE IN PROTESTANT THOUGHT

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PAUL LEHMANN

With a Foreword by
REINHOLD NIEBUHR

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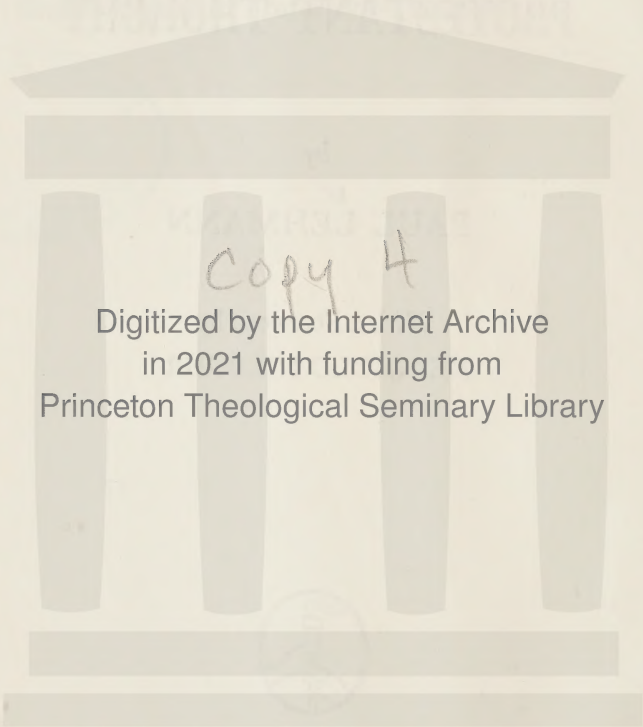

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FIRST EDITION

C-P

MEAE DILECTISSIMAE

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Foreword

THE CRUCIAL ISSUE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION WAS THE QUESTION OF GRACE AND FORGIVENESS. THE reformers believed that Catholicism interpreted the forgiveness of God in such a way as to assure the goodness and virtue of man, once divine grace had set man upon the path of righteousness. They accused Catholicism of falling into the same error of self-righteousness as that of the Jewish legalists against whom Christ and St. Paul contended.

In distinction the Reformers believed that there is no possibility of man achieving any goodness which would make it possible for him to be justified in the final judgment, if divine mercy does not achieve this justification. This emphasis of the Reformation has been as lost in modern Protestantism, as it was absent from pre-Reformation thought. The modern Christian always insists that he finds the Protestant theory of forgiveness through the "imputation" of righteousness both immoral and irrational. But the real fact is that he, as many pre-Reformation theologians, finds the doctrine primarily irrelevant, because his confidence in the virtue of the redeemed man makes the forgiveness of which this doctrine teaches quite unnecessary.

Professor Lehmann's very vigorous treatise on the Reformation doctrine of forgiveness, as revived by Karl Barth in reaction to the dissipation of the doctrine in liberal theology, brings the central issue of Christian theology into sharp focus. That this is the central issue of Christian theology, is a fact not yet fully recognized in the modern church. Sooner or later it must be recognized. I have a great hope that Professor Lehmann's book will help modern Christian thinkers to come to this realization. Professor Lehmann has thought the problem through with an intellectual vigor and profundity, and with a sure grasp of all the significant issues, which marks him as one of the most promising of our younger theologians.

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

Preface

THE IMPASSE WHICH COVERNS CONTEMPORARY PROTESTANT PREACHING, THINKING, AND LIVING IS MOST directly traceable to the gradual disintegration of liberalism and the still uncertain ascendancy of the dialectical movement. Although the first was measurably hastened by the critical attack of the second, the latter does not seem to have turned its initial sweep of continental religious thought to anything like permanent account. It is only beginning to invade American church life at a time when the swift and turbulent currents of European society are rendering theological labors both difficult and unwelcome. Indeed, American Protestantism may yet be charged with the responsibility for the life of Christianity, discharging in some measure thereby its obligation to the continent of its origin, with which it now shares the impotence of the church against the rising tide of secular forces. But this prospect, more imminent perhaps than any one dare anticipate, only underscores the present need for a theological reconstruction. The following pages are an attempt in a limited way to meet this need.

The most positive and widely influential formulation of Protestant liberalism is the theology of Albrecht

Ritschl. It is, moreover, the immediate background of American religious thought, having inspired directly or indirectly its leading representatives. Since the conception of forgiveness is both the life line of Protestantism and the major concern of Ritschl's systematic writings, it has seemed desirable to attack the current theological situation from the standpoint of the idea of forgiveness in Protestantism. The strategic critical significance of the dialectical theology makes the thought of its founder and leading spirit mandatory upon any effort to remold the present state of theological affairs. In a conversation in which the question was raised concerning the relation of his theology to that of Ritschl, Karl Barth replied: "*Es liegt viel zwischen Ritschl und mir.*" This is a little disheartening, for besides various minor disparities between the two theologians, there are at least three major ones to provide a suitable point of departure. The conception of forgiveness in the New Testament, the theology of the Reformation, and the religion of the Enlightenment, each involves issues vital and divisive enough to supply critical illumination for the projected course of this undertaking. However, for reasons that it is hoped will become sufficiently apparent below, the theory of religion of the Enlightenment has seemed to offer the most instructive perspective.

The central thesis of what follows is: that the controlling principle of the religion of the Enlightenment

has contributed fundamentally to the difficulty in which theology now finds itself, and that the revitalization of the preaching and the piety of Protestantism depends upon an interpretation of the idea of forgiveness that will be effectively divorced from eighteenth-century moorings. The strategic question is whether forgiveness is fundamentally an "unheard-of miracle" or whether it is something other, something less than that. The conception of forgiveness in the theologies of Albrecht Ritschl and Karl Barth attempts to indicate the terms of a categorical reply. It, therefore, confronts the theology of the present with a decision of critical importance both for its own integrity and for the relevance of the theology that is to come.

Since the scope of this inquiry is necessarily historical, as well as systematic and critical, the sources underlying it have been extensively referred to. Sometimes it has been possible to minister to the soul of wit by indirect citation. But wherever the context has seemed essential and timely, not even space has been spared in the attempt to give full consideration to what was once spoken or written. The systematic and critical chapters, therefore, are more amply documented than the historical ones, that is, from chapter three onward. The longest chapter is the seventh. Direct acquaintance with the writings of Karl Barth is still unfortunately minimal in this country. Although some of the major works are gradually finding their way into translation,

there are numerous shorter ones, equally stimulating and indispensable, which will never reach the monolinguists. On this account, Barth has been allowed to speak for himself more constantly than his eminent predecessor in the theological faculty at Bonn. Ritschl's magnum opus has acquired a familiarity of longer standing and of greater extent owing to a standard English edition. This has been used wherever possible in the discussion of his thought. My own translation, with one indicated exception, has been offered as the vehicle for the thought of Karl Barth. Unless otherwise noted, scattered translations appear throughout which are also mine. As the argument has proceeded, three considerations have presented themselves which, although not directly relevant to it, have, nevertheless, overruled elimination and been lodged in an appendix at the close. The final attachment is the list of references and notes which have been numbered consecutively in each chapter.

So many and so great are the resources that have made this study possible, that it is as futile as it is necessary to attempt something like an adequate acknowledgment of my indebtedness. Nevertheless, it is with respectful and lasting appreciation that mention is ventured of the wise counsel, friendly encouragement, and generous cooperation of: the Faculty of the Union Theological Seminary in the city of New York, whose grant of the Fogg Travelling Fellowship made possible

a study of the dialectical theology under the guidance of its leaders, Professor Karl Barth in the Protestant Theological Faculty at the University of Bonn and Professor Emil Brunner in the Protestant Theological Faculty at the University of Zurich; of Professor John Baillie at whose suggestion these pages were begun, and who has joined with Professor Reinhold Niebuhr, and Professor Wilhelm Pauck in the unconditional dispensation of enriching insight, solid learning, and patient debate; of Professor William Walker Rockwell, Librarian, and of Professor Harold H. Tryon, Registrar of the Union Theological Seminary for the willing extension of privileges which greatly facilitated the preparation of the manuscript; of Professor Karl H. Carlson of Elmhurst College, whose painstaking reading of the manuscript and invaluable criticism of its style have greatly improved the form of what has been written; and of President Timothy Lehmann, and Dean Theophil W. Mueller of Elmhurst College, whose kindly interest not infrequently made time available in order that what was under way might be completed.

P. L.

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FORGIVENESS

Decisive Issue in Protestant Thought

Chapter I

To Forgive or To Be Forgiven

CHRISTIAN PREACHING AND CHRISTIAN PIETY ARE IN A DILEMMA. CONTEMPORARY HOMILETICS HAS ABANDONED its theological responsibility for an enervating controversy over sermonic methodology and form. The normative position of the Bible, which supplied the preaching of an earlier day with concreteness and vitality, has been exchanged for definitely inferior criteria. The monotony of textual literalism has reduced the religious demand upon human life to the simple routine of phrase and precept, or bored men altogether. The somewhat more exciting pursuit of topical variety in preaching has enlivened, and at the same time softened, the religious demand by combining it neatly with human interest and the more flattering human aspirations. Such proceedings may diminish boredom. But they are ultimately as ineffective against cynicism and open irreligion as the formalism they were designed to correct. Neither textual literalism nor topical liberalism has achieved a sufficiently incisive and relevant articulation of the Christian gospel to provide a compelling direction to which human life may be

committed. Contemporary piety has descended to the incalculable *niveau* of generally accepted sentiments of benevolence which, because they are desirable, are regarded as religious. They lack sufficient critical precision to safeguard the Christian life from the continuing threat of over-simplification in an increasingly complicated world.

Broadly speaking, the sermon has come to be a twenty-to-thirty-minute discourse which occurs at some aesthetically or unaesthetically determined point in the regular routine of Sunday morning worship. It rehearses with varying attractiveness and timeliness what biblical tradition or common decency have led the worshipers to expect from what they are pleased to call "church." There is really no fundamental difference between this kind of discourse and any other to which respectable people would listen except that the surroundings seem to require different symbols of expression. These surroundings and symbols together with the personality of the preacher are assumed to establish the Christian character of what is preached. Those who listen, moreover, do not need to heed. What they hear confirms, for the most part, what they are. They prefer goodness to wickedness, sympathy to callousness, trustworthiness to dishonesty, and, if pressed far enough, God to the devil. Since they already know how they ought to behave, and since they believe that they can behave as they ought, it is convenient to

have access to a periodic reminder (weekly, fortnightly, semiannually, or annually) of the path to contentment, and occasionally even delightful to be inspired to walk therein.

Thus, the prevailing dilemma of the pulpit and the pew is the inevitable consequence of mutually fostered habits. When the sermon attempts to be true to itself as a sermon, it loses its effective relation to modern life; and when it aims at contemporaneousness, it loses its distinctiveness as Christian preaching. When piety attempts to be faithful to its essential forms, it becomes legalistic; and when it aims at effective expression in modern life, it surrenders its specifically Christian character.

American Protestantism provides an instructive theater in which to witness the disintegrating effects of this dilemma. The shadows of the controversy between orthodoxy and liberalism are still sufficiently discernible in the life of the church to assist the interpretation of the historical circumstances which brought Fundamentalist and Modernist into such unhappy opposition. The reconstructive theological movements which have begun to carry religious thinking and living abroad in a new and more aggressive direction are, as yet, quite dimly adumbrated in the United States. Recent developments are making plain the gradual but definitely accelerating tempo of this penetration. The current attack upon theological liberalism with the

consequent re-examination and re-affirmation of its premises and merits on the part of those who have hitherto held the center of the theological stage are the negative symptoms of a changing point of view. What promises to be of more positive and more permanent worth is the urgent consideration that is everywhere being given to the question of the nature and the meaning of the Christian Church in the world. If this promise comes to any kind of fulfillment, it will emphasize a third strategic element in the American scene. Theological thinking will be done less and less anarchically, and more and more under a conscious relation to and responsibility for an ecumenical theological tradition. The breakup of the New England theology into sectarian repristination on the one hand, and secularized thought forms on the other, has led to the abandonment of that tradition. What denominational scrupulousness overlooked, remained for rationalistic and humanistic theological principles to complete. Nevertheless, the continental roots of American theology may still be sufficiently virile to bear fruit. It is not inconceivable that the present influx of *émigrés* from abroad may so nourish theological vitality here that the distinctive elements in the American tradition may enrich the universal church.[1]

The realization of such hopes requires a fundamental rediscovery. It must be admitted again that Christian preaching and Christian piety are not autonomous but

governed by a definite sequence of ideas. This sequence is born of the New Testament teaching about the meaning of Christ's coming in the flesh. It obtained its principal impetus from the preaching and the teaching of Saint Paul, for whom the cross of Christ signified an amazing contrast between the righteousness of God and the legal righteousness of the rabbinical tradition. The futility of Judaism was embodied in its acceptance of the attempt of man, in the last analysis, to save himself. The righteous God declares man righteous in recognition of his having fulfilled the law. The incomparable glory of Christianity appeared in its promise of the salvation of man in spite of himself. The gracious God declared man righteous as a sheer gift irrespective of his having fulfilled the law.

But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto many. And not as through one that sinned so is the gift; for judgment came of one unto condemnation but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in the life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so

through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life (Romans 5:15-18).

It will be noted that in this very typical Pauline passage the leading conceptions of *grace, free gift, righteousness, justification,* are centered in the advent of Jesus Christ. Since in later centuries, Luther made this event the focus of his own thinking about the relations between God and man in Christ, it is not too much to regard it as the core of Christian thinking as dynamic Protestantism understands it. The righteousness of God is attributed to man because of the life and death of Jesus Christ; otherwise man could lay no claim to it. Here is the necessary point of departure for all specifically Christian expositions of the relations between God and man. It implies, moreover, that what God gives to man, man really needs. This gift enables man to know what God is and what he himself is. For God's act is God's *forgiveness* of the *guilty* sinner (vs. 16). Further, man actually can live by the conviction that Christ came for his sake and that he *is* forgiven. For he *believes* that, in the act of forgiveness, God actually deals with him *in Christ.* It is his faith in this imputation which gives meaning to his life (vss. 17-19). Forgiveness and guilt, imputation and faith, these are the principal constituents which, despite the variety of interpretations, have persisted as the heart of the *good news* of Jesus Christ.

Now the correct exposition of this gospel requires

the rigorous adherence to its paradoxical foundation. Forgiveness is the judgment of God over man, wherein man is predicated with both sin and righteousness. This judgment is expressed in the life and work of Jesus Christ, who is the revelation of the divine nature and the divine will. It is acknowledged in faith. Faith is the divinely given response of man to what God has done in Christ. But, how can man, at one and the same time, be both sinful and righteous? Traditional theology has answered in the form of the doctrine of *Justification by Faith*. The reply of contemporary theology is the doctrine of the *Forgiveness of Sins*. "The content of Justification," writes Professor Paul Althaus, "is identical with the forgiveness of the sinner. . . . The paradoxical conception, 'justification of the sinner,' judiciary acquittal of the guilty brings to pointed expression the unheard-of miracle of forgiveness."[2] This question, whether, and in what sense, forgiveness is an *unheard-of miracle* focuses the problem sharply. It establishes the criterion for genuine Christian preaching and the function of theological discipline as the guardian of that integrity. Indeed, the interdependence of preacher and theologian is so strategic for the vitality of the church that it is safe to predict that when the preacher recovers the sense of his scholarly responsibilities and the theologian the sense of his pastoral ones, Christian thinking and Christian living will take on not only dignity but power. The substance of these pages

is concerned with certain of the more critical contemporary theological implications of the paradoxical essence of the Christian message. But the discussion is accompanied by the conviction that these implications have a distinctly practical bearing upon homiletics.

The interpretation of the Christian paradox of the forgiveness of sins has, since the beginning of Christian theology, disclosed the faithfulness of the theologian to his task.[3] A theology which accepts this paradox as actual, i.e., as the constitutive principle of its thinking, will present one kind of picture. The picture will be of quite another sort, however, when a theology accepts it as only apparent, and devotes itself to making it intellectually and morally convincing.

The dogmatic-historical embodiment of this critical theological issue is, of course, the Protestant Reformation. That occidental Christianity should have been permanently divided over the interpretation of the gospel of forgiveness is a formidable circumstance. Catholic theology taught the primary agency of the grace of God and radical human sinfulness. Human thought and conduct have, perhaps, never been as thoroughly regimented by a conviction of divine authority. Yet when it came to that point in the teaching of the church where God and man meet, namely, the event of forgiveness in Christ, the Reformers saw with penetrating clarity what was at stake. To forgive or to be forgiven, that was the real question! All the affirma-

tions of the Catholic tradition to the contrary notwithstanding, it was impossible to reconcile a genuine awareness of divine authority or of human depravity with a doctrine of salvation by works. In one sense, Protestantism and Catholicism have much in common. In another sense, they have nothing in common. The conception of forgiveness marks the parting of the ways. However familiar the routes may seem, they are not the same routes. Everything depends upon this: is forgiveness fundamentally an unheard-of miracle, or is it something other, something less than that?

It is characteristic of the theological perspicacity of the Roman Church that its position with regard to this question has been constant. Forgiveness is something less than an unheard-of miracle. And if the Reformers had no illusions about the truth of the opposite, their successors had many. The idea of forgiveness in Protestantism has been the victim of a grave theological mistake. Protestant thinking has proceeded upon presuppositions which are essentially alien to the religious insights of the Reformers. Consequently, the theology of their descendants has been torn between the Scylla of scholasticism and the Charybdis of humanism. The initial appeal of the former inhered in the prospect of bringing medieval theological thought to some other than a Thomistic synthesis. The persuasiveness of the latter was the fruit of the growing conviction that men who were first of all modern, re-

quired an entirely new way of thinking if they were to be brought to look with favor upon the idea of being Christian as well. Whether or not the idea of forgiveness had specific implications of its own by which the Protestant theologian must be governed was not important. But it can scarcely be either unimportant or accidental that the contemporary theological confusion has developed amidst the gradual but definite elimination of the idea of forgiveness from its originally directive hold upon Protestant piety and preaching.

Almost immediately after the Reformers had made their attempt at a theology adequate for a gospel of forgiveness, the focus of the theological problem was returned to the point from which they had deflected it. Men sought again to demonstrate the validity of the claims of faith on the basis of a general knowledge of man and the world. The *outer* logic of science (nature) and philosophy (reason) began to replace the *inner* logic of faith as the major aspect of the theological problem. Thus, Protestant orthodoxy was unable in any thoroughgoing way to free itself from the effect of the well-known marriage of Aristotle with the Schoolmen. Inaugurated in the ascendancy of Melanchthon's influence over Luther's in the Diet of Augsburg, 1530, "Protestant Scholasticism" made Christian thinking somewhat more sensible of its own legitimate tradition, but bound it over to the same type of medieval rationalism from which it seemed for a time to have been

liberated by the great reformer. The result was a dogmatics largely repristinatory in nature which was ill-calculated to withstand the attacks of the militant rationalism that were all too soon to be made against it. "As compared with that of the Middle Ages, Protestant Scholasticism had the great disadvantage of being out of line with the prevailing intellectual currents of the day. As a result . . . its downfall was the more speedy and complete."[4]

The two centuries in which the doom of Protestant orthodoxy was being sealed, wrought such far-reaching changes in the interpretation of religion that a wholly new foundation for theological thinking was the result. Moreover, when we consider the structure of the theory of religion of that time, and then look sharply at the way in which it has become customary to approach the theological problem in our own time, the current significance of this new foundation is apparent. That religion must be a matter not of doctrine but life; that nothing can be valid for religion that does not justify itself at the bar of experience, however that term may be understood; that divine revelation is correlative with human discovery; that the right of religion to an unquestioned place in the multi-colored tapestry of human life is guaranteed by its social utility; that the claim of Christianity to supremacy in the far-flung economy of God is supported by its ethical potency—these are the obiter dicta of the present religious mood.

Although they have had their exponents almost from the beginning of systematic theological reflection, it remained for a relatively recent "philosophical century" to give them influential formulation. For it is in the period of time begun, "in the year 1690 with the publication of Locke's famous *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and . . brought to its close in the year 1781 with the appearance of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*,"[5] that a vigorous reconstruction of the whole way of theologizing was attempted. Eventually it supplied the principle with which all subsequent theological thinking felt itself called upon more or less deliberately to begin.

Thus, the issue which this century raised for religious thinking, and its effect upon the dynamic Protestant idea of forgiveness become the major concerns of these pages. This idea is particularly difficult to trace because the most widely influential thinkers within the theological tradition and outside of it, repeatedly made the mistake of accepting their own desire for a break with eighteenth-century ways of thinking about religion as the actual accomplishment of that break. Perhaps, we are only beginning to achieve a perspective upon the period about to be reviewed that is sufficiently detached to enable us to distinguish its oversights from its insights and come to a truer appraisal of its development. The most recent theological tendencies seem to lend considerable support to this

possibility both because of the force of their attack upon the Enlightenment and the deliberate independence of their own theological method. Nevertheless, it is a fact of inescapable impressiveness that all except the most recent protests against the intellectual and spiritual climate of the eighteenth century should, in the matter of a theory of religion, have disclosed an essential kinship with its antagonist.

The understanding of the meaning and the history of the idea of forgiveness in Protestantism depends, therefore, upon the following considerations: an appraisal of the religious issue of the eighteenth century and its influence upon the idea of forgiveness; an examination of the failure of the more influential subsequent theories of religion to dislodge the idea of forgiveness from the position in which the Enlightenment had firmly established it; and finally, an interpretation of the critical decision with which Protestantism is confronted by reason of the decisively critical role of the idea of forgiveness in Protestantism from the beginning.

Chapter II

An Enlightened Religion

THE FATE OF THE IDEA OF FORGIVENESS DURING THE PERIOD OF THE SO-CALLED "ENLIGHTENMENT" significantly marks the essential spirit of the religious outlook of the eighteenth century. The *Aufklaerung* was both the executor and the executioner of the religious inheritance from Protestant orthodoxy. There were many factors making for the transformation of this trust into a tribunal. The political repercussions of the doctrinal controversies which split the orthodox church asunder proved distracting to sound theological thinking. Many sensitive spirits and penetrating minds, far from inclining toward irreligion, looked for a worthier representation of Christianity. Sometimes the attack upon traditional Christianity in the name of the *Age of Reason* has been regarded as inspired by a fundamental hostility to religion as such. Piety, probably because of its intimately personal character, has a way of mistaking criticism for atheism. But it is an error to apply this confusion to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Of one of the most distinguished representatives of this period, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, it

has been said, that religion was his chief interest.[1] And of the changes animating the period as a whole, the studied judgment is that they "first secured a strong foothold in religious ideas."[2]

But if the Enlightenment was not inclined against religion, it does not follow necessarily that the kind of religion toward which it leaned was really worthy of the name. This begins to be apparent when one asks about the idea of forgiveness. There was only traditional concern for it, which is tantamount to saying that there was no concern for it at all. The revolt against orthodoxy more and more took the form of a protracted debate over the nature of religious truth which crowded the basic insight of the Reformation quite thoroughly out of mind. "One practised, now," we are told, "belief in Divine Providence, patience, prayer, as characteristics of the Christian life, without admitting the decisions of the dogmaticians that these achievements derived from natural religion and a general view of the world. But one could no longer understand the doctrine of forgiveness if one ceased to reckon that piety to oneself precisely as the consequence and the test of reconciliation through Christ."[3] Indeed, history was to prove that one really could not avoid admitting either the decisions of the dogmaticians or the significant relation of Christ to practical piety. The waning interest in the idea of forgiveness and its implications, coupled with the basic agreement

between the Christian Apologists and the exponents of the new theory of religion, carried the dogmas of natural religion to victorious acceptance.

In a word, the theory of religion of the Enlightenment is, that man, by the natural light of his own reason, can acquire the knowledge of God and of His will sufficient for right living. The Medieval Schoolmen had added to the long-established rational or speculative avenue to religious truth, the way of revelation. The natural light of human reason was held to be sufficient to convince men of the existence of God, and of the immortality of the soul. But the knowledge of the Divine Trinity, of the mystery of the Incarnation, and the divine plan of salvation, was quite beyond the ordinary rational equipment of mankind. Not that these more intricate articles of the Christian creed were unknowable. The genius of scholastic theology was that it satisfactorily persuaded men that there was another road to religious truth, as worthy and as reliable as the one to which they had always been accustomed to turn. Reason and Revelation, Science and Faith—these were the pillars of that adroit Medieval Synthesis which is the crowning achievement of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and still the orthodox position of Roman Catholicism. It was as though the thirteenth century had brought to glorious fruition what men had searched and struggled for since the beginning of systematic reflection on religion, nearly

eighteen hundred years before. In a sense, the history of all theological thinking is the history of the controversy between science and faith. At last the dispute had been settled. And in such a way that one wonders not so much at the majestic representation it still receives today as at the boldness of those who within two hundred years raised voices of protest against it.

The departure from Scholastic teaching which marked the *Aufklaerung* and became the core of its theory of religion "took the form of a greater and ever-increasing reliance upon the 'light of reason'; so that finally, perhaps by the middle of the eighteenth century, it became no uncommon thing for philosophers and radically-minded theologians altogether to disregard faith and revelation as a possible avenue to truth, and to place their sole reliance upon the results of purely scientific philosophy. This is the position which we know as rationalism. Historically regarded, it may be defined as the view which leaves one half of the Medieval Synthesis (its theory of reason) just as it was, while setting the other half (the theory of revelation) completely aside."[4]

On this foundation, rational religion erected its creed. Its tenets were few but they show how the rigorous and outspoken theism inherited from tradition was being limited. This limited theism is known as Deism. The Deist creed is essentially tripartite. From the works of Archbishop Tillotson, Professor

McGiffert has reproduced this summary of it. The Deist believes that "there is a God, that He demands virtuous living on the part of man, and that He will reward the righteous and punish the wicked."[5] These precepts are given in natural religion. But what about revelation? What were the nature and function of that which the medieval Doctors had called faith and had so neatly harmonized with science? A flat denial that these questions had any bearing upon the religious problem could not suffice. The wisdom of the past was profound enough to outlive too facile a dismissal of its claims. These claims, moreover, were not without able representation. There were Christian Apologists as well as champions of natural religion. But when the heat of the controversy between the two groups had cooled, it was apparent that the decrees of natural religion had triumphed over the insights of revealed religion.

The conception of a *religion of nature* passed from the pen of Lord Herbert of Cherbury into the common parlance of eighteenth-century theology. Intense and apparently irreconcilable ecclesiastical and theological differences seemed to require a common platform on which those differences might be composed. Lord Herbert, accordingly, "set up common consent as the principal test of truth, and applying the criterion in the religious sphere, distinguished a natural religion shared by wise men of all ages and races, from the vari-

ous positive faiths which had added many unessential tenets, obscuring the great and vital truths, and introducing religious dissension where there should have been universal harmony."[6] The ethico-epistemological orientation of Cherbury's work is clear. The natural rational perspective from which the theologian looks at man and the world requires that he make sure about his theory of knowledge first of all. By this means, he calculates certain moral minima which appear to hold human existence together. Since they also appear to have found persistent religious formulation, they are established as the *common notions of religion* on which hang all the law and the prophets. Why should any normal, natural, human being need or desire to believe more than this: "that there is a supreme Deity; that this Deity ought to be worshipped; that virtue combined with piety is the chief part of divine worship; that men should repent of their sins and turn from them; that reward and punishment follow from the goodness and justice of God, both in this life and after it"?[7]

For two reasons, the achievement of religious harmony is not so simple. In the first place, the real complexities of human existence are certain, sooner or later, to uncover the impoverishment of faith on such a foundation. The disturbing question will not be silenced: if this is the sum and substance of the creed of religion, why not dispense with religion altogether?

And secondly, a proper respect for historic human experience must deal more cautiously with the idea of revelation than so subtle an elimination of it obviously did.

The enlightened religion of the eighteenth century was religion without revelation. Men were religious just as they were rational. If they would but slough off the encrustations of ecclesiastical and theological ingenuity and remain faithful to the simple, inevitable convictions of rational men, there would be room neither for controversy nor confusion. For this religion of nature is also the religion of reason. Its axia are anchored in the rational principle of identity, according to which, in good Greek fashion, the divine and the human have the same fundamental nature, the inherent rationality of the soul. Not that God and man are indistinguishable. Cherbury, and all the Deists with him, believed that the supreme Deity *ought to be worshipped.* And man does worship. As we like to put it, he worships that which is *more than himself,* a *something which is beyond himself, better than himself,* on which he is more or less aware that he is *dependent.* It is as though God and man were at opposite ends of a pole. The pole is the reason, which, as the unifying principle (nature) underlying all change and variation, is common to them both. The pole has two ends, to be sure, but they are, nevertheless, ends of the *same* pole. It is the "Law of Reason and Nature," as the Stoics

liked to say, that decrees the polarity between man and God. Lord Herbert's creed is the verbal formulation of that innate equipment which makes a man a man. So far as religion is concerned, this is really all that counts.

Clearly, in such a scheme the idea of revelation has no tenure of its own. Its title bears a mortgage. And those charged with the litigation plead rather that "possession is eleven points in the law" (Cibber) than that "the charter of thy worth gives thee releasing" (Shakespeare). Indeed, the pathos of human thinking is that ever and again ideas are propagated without the clear perception of their ultimate implications. Men do not readily abandon them when they have passed their usefulness. It is always easier and, of course, more comfortable to bask in the reflected brilliance of a waning glory than to venture upon the doubtful splendor of obedience to the heavenly vision. The gradual and outspoken ostracism of the conception of revelation since the eighteenth century is an eloquent case in point. The outcome, however, was scarcely in doubt. Already with the announcement of the doctrine of common notions, it had been foreshadowed. "Whatever," says Professor Sorley, "is contrary to the 'five points' is contrary to reason and therefore false; what is beyond reason but not contrary to it may be revealed; but the record of a revelation is not itself revelation but tradition; and the truth of a tradition depends upon the

narrator and can never be more than probable."[8] "Contrary to reason and therefore false"; "beyond reason but not contrary to it"; "not contrary to but according to reason"; these were the phrases by which the fate of revealed religion was determined. Naturally the voices of Christian Apologists were the loudest in ringing the changes. For it was not so much revelation in general, as the revelation given in Christianity that was on trial.

The view that found initial favor, among both Deists and Apologists, was that the Christian revelation supplemented the natural light of reason. This does not appear to be very far removed from what the Medievals had contended. But in two fundamental respects it was. On the one hand, the supplementary material could in no sense contradict the rational principles of natural religion. On the other hand, the supposed revelation must rest upon positive grounds, in themselves sufficiently rational to dissuade opposition. Unfortunately, the Apologists were too easily convinced. The acceptance of these grounds committed them to everything that was basic to the deistic position, and led them to defend Christianity with the equally rational concept of *Christian evidences*. The fundamental insights of the Christian gospel were simply ignored. Thus, the religion of nature entered the lists, fully and confidently armed, whereas Christian Apology took

its position with distinctly inferior accoutrements. It was a tournament against the odds.

The *evidences* on which the defenders of the faith relied were the argument from prophecy and the argument from miracle. It was always granted that some truth could be the possession of some men and not others. Provided their testimony was *in accordance with reason*, it was entitled to credence, especially if it found fulfillment in fact. This was the substance of the argument from prophecy. For the claim of the Old Testament prophets to the possession of divine truth was attested by the actual fulfillment of their declarations by Christ. The supreme proof, however, for the validity of a truth proclaimed as revealed was always the concomitant presence of a visible sign. This empirical evidence in support of a given declaration was regarded as a miracle. "A miracle," wrote Archbishop Tillotson, "is a supernatural effect, and wonderful to sense. . . . But yet miracles are the principal external proof and confirmation of the divinity of a doctrine."[9] And his younger contemporary, John Locke, took the same view. For him, a miracle is "a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator and in his opinion contrary to the established order of nature, is taken by him to be divine. . . . Divine revelation receives testimony from no other miracles but such as are wrought to witness his mission from God who delivers the revelation."[10]

These Christian evidences were rational because they consisted of the words and deeds of rational men, and always with visible corroboration. The appeal to these evidences has continued to this day. But the original is distinguished from the contemporary resort to them by the fact that the rationalistic premises and aims of the faith were steadily kept in view. Modern fundamentalists are thus the confused descendants of eighteenth-century Apologists. The earlier supernaturalism that was bound by the rational was much less deceptive than the later supernaturalism bound into the irrational.

The denouement of eighteenth-century Christian Apologetics ought to have made it clear long ago that true religious fundamentalism can take neither course. The inexorable logic of the tendencies of the time gradually swept even the argument from the rationality of Christian evidences away. This became apparent when the arguments from prophecy and miracle began to be turned the other way around. Instead of supplying rational support for the Christian revelation, the Christian revelation was used to support them. Thus, in a certain *View of the Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion,* it was maintained that "to prove . . . the truth of the Christian religion, we should begin by showing the internal marks of divinity which are stamped upon it . . . for if we have once reason to be convinced that this religion is derived from a supernat-

ural origin, prophecies and miracles will become so far from being incredible, that it will be highly probable that a supernatural revelation should be foretold and enforced by supernatural means."[11] Obviously, the wall of partition that separated this way of speaking from anything that the most enthusiastic devotee of natural religion would write, was extremely transparent. It was as though one could clearly penetrate it and see Mathew Tindal at work in his study fashioning the only apologetic platform which could possibly stand. Christianity was really as *Old as Creation*. Its belated historical appearance was essentially a *republication of the religion of nature*.[12] Like Locke before him, Tindal held that men had strayed from the purity and clarity of the light of reason. But instead of ascribing the defection to the insufficiency of reason, he laid it at the door of a crafty and ingenious ecclesiasticism. It was "the business of the Christian dispensation . . . to destroy all those traditional Revelations, and restore, free from all Idolatry, the true, primitive, and natural Religion, implanted in Mankind from the Creation."[13]

Tindal was a Deist, not a defender of orthodoxy. But unfortunately the consequences of the apologetic position were disclosed by its opponents. For this service, they were rewarded with the accusation of trying to destroy Christianity. As a matter of fact, Christianity, the Christianity of the gospel of forgiveness, was

already dead in the hearts and the minds of men. The debate centered around something other than the New Covenant. What really separated Deists and Apologists from one another was "not so much . . . any great disagreement in religious beliefs and in ethical ideals, as . . . a difference of attitude toward the ecclesiastical establishment and the ecclesiastical authorities."[14] The merit of the so-called orthodox was their loyalty to the institution of Christ, the church of His founding, despite its glaring defects, which many of them admitted frankly. The merit of their opponents was a loyalty to the fruits of Christ's coming, the essentials of true morality and religion. But what fundamentally undermined the genuine loyalty of both was that which bound them each to each and cast doubt upon their loyalty to Christ. It was the unswerving fidelity to and confidence in human reason. In the last analysis, this devotion committed both parties to the creed of natural religion. With the religion of reason, a profession of faith in the religion of revelation could not be reconciled.

There is, thus, a striking ladder-like parallelism running through this survey of the theory of religion of the Enlightenment. Unlike the ladder of the ancient Hebrew patriarch, the rungs are so made that they will only permit ascent, not descent. The angles at which they severally meet the shafts are considerably less than right angles, for the intersection is not per-

pendicular. On the one side, the junctions are these: the attack upon the medieval synthesis; the destruction of the religion of forgiveness; the creed of natural religion. On the other side, they are: the supra-rational but not irrational validity of revelation; the support of revelation from special evidences, prophecy and miracle; the identification of the religion of revelation with the religion of nature. On the one hand, there is the tripartite assertion of the sovereignty of the human reason; on the other, the triple retreat of the conception of revelation. This ladder is not the vision of man in a dream. It is the Promethean construction of man conscious of himself and proud of what his reason has erected. There are no angels of God descending; none, therefore, ascending. There is only the titanic ascent of him who *is* because he *thinks*, to storm the citadel of heaven.

Gradually we have been uncovering the true foundation on which the theory of religion of the eighteenth century, like that century itself, is secured. It is *MAN*! This is the first word and the last. It is the word with which the age of the Enlightenment must be forever coupled. History has sealed an epoch. The groaning and the travail of the whole creation have wrought their laborious birth. The proper study of mankind is Man (Pope). And man has become competent to undertake it—unafraid! Perhaps the most significant indication of the power of this new self-confidence is

the fact that the modern man instinctively regards it as his own. History seems to echo the voice that speaks in his own soul. But the man who once answered to other voices is forgotten beyond recall. For the former things are passed away.

The man of today, like his eighteenth-century prototype, believes that the conversation he thus holds with himself is a dialogue. Man is still doing a good share of the talking, and he still thinks that he is talking with God. The God who can really tell him nothing significant about himself, can tell him much that is important about his fellows. The fundamental humanism of the religion of the Enlightenment, instead of severing the bond between religion and morality, cemented it. Man, having abolished all fear at his own existence, owing to his complete *at-homeness* in the world of nature, was, nevertheless, afraid of the existence of his fellows. The Deist creed promoted an almost exclusive concern for the practical duties of life. The sole function of religion was the nurture of natural morality by giving it the support of divine authority. It is, however, a well-known psycho-pathological phenomenon that a given mental state may be the opposite of the one which is really determining for the personality. Just so, man's timidity before his fellows served rather to quicken than to discipline the boldness to which he aspired. For, as Professor McGiffert has aptly put it, "it was inevitable that when religion was regarded as

a mere means to morality the more the principle of human ability was emphasized the less need there must seem of religion. . . . Unless religion had some other function than the mere promotion of virtue, unless it offered something else than a crutch to the lame or an aid to the weak, there was apparently no place for it more."[15]

The man whose temerity of spirit had relegated revelation to oblivion, and subordinated faith to virtue, did not shrink from this conclusion. In the tournament, in which the Deists and Apologists had too much in common for either to emerge victorious, another champion was entered. He bore the shield of skepticism and the name of David Hume. In him the promising intimations of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, so persuasively expounded by John Locke, came to their inevitable conclusion. He alone saw clearly their implications and followed them through to the end. What Hume did was to carry Locke's sensationalism to the point where it was turned back upon him in the form of a discredited epistemology. An epistemologically grounded religion was necessarily discredited also. If he could show that "among the phenomena of the mind, therefore, there is no occasion or place for anything but the transient play of shifting impressions,"[16] it was not difficult for him to attack the axiomatic character of rational religion and invalidate "the assumption that natural religion is justifiable in

reason, and as such can be regarded as scientifically grounded."[17] Deism or orthodox theism—these were the only religious forms that Hume knew. He found the alternatives decidedly unsatisfactory and rejected religion altogether.

Thus, the inexorable logic of the Enlightenment ultimately claimed also its theory of religion. From those who wanted to believe—and it must be remembered that the gifted and awakened spirits wanted to believe—it exacted a heavy toll. It gave them the knowledge of good and evil and made them ashamed of their nakedness. An ethic of self-interest had been legitimized as belonging to the rational equipment of man, and brought to its highest expression in the bond between happiness and virtue. It plainly contradicted an ethic of forgiveness, according to which man's existence and his responsibility to his fellows are not self-evident but derived from man's responsibility to God. No longer sensitive to their need of Him whose boundless grace had clothed them, they sought to allay their shame with fig leaves—and hid. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, stripped of its bark, had become a pole, at the one end of which was man, at the other end, God. And there is no more eloquent witness both to the fruit and the root of the principle of polarity in religion than the phenomenon of natural religion. There is voluminous and genuine discourse concerning God and His will. But it is the

discourse of those who are so intoxicated by the logical agility with which they can—and must—persuade themselves that "there is a God and virtue is His will," that they do not know how skeptical they really are. The principle of polarity in religion, as we have followed its elaboration from Lord Herbert to Hume, is one of those many undercurrents of the human spirit, whose very ancient depths came to the surface in the eighteenth century. The pathos of religion, in this view of the relations between God and man, is that the pole that connects them has neither direction nor measurement. It may extend horizontally as well as vertically, and it is always difficult to ascertain which end is the divine and which the human. There are no clear lines of demarcation to indicate where the sphere of influence of the one begins and the other ends. But the record of history stands. Such a conception of polarity can only flourish when man has cast off the last restraint of creaturehood and, *fully enlightened*, has become lord of creation and master of all he surveys. All this, however, only confirms the record of the prophets. Such a man is alone in the world he commands. Sovereign that he is, he desires nothing more than sovereignty, and this he has now usurped. His talk about God, as about everything else, has turned out to be a conversation with himself. It is a monologue in which he is proudly—or is it wistfully?—rehearsing the temptation to which he has unsuspectingly succumbed—*you will be like God!*[18]

Chapter III

The Doubtful Triumph of Belief

THE SKEPTICAL CULMINATION OF THE PHILOSOPHIC TRADITION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BROUGHT theological thinking face to face with a momentous decision. Either some fundamentally different role must be assigned to reason in religion, or some fundamentally different conception of faith must be found, or both. If the history of theologico-philosophic inquiry from Socrates to Hume teaches anything at all, it is that belief in the Christian God, the God of forgiveness, requires interpretation on some other basis than that of the principle of polarity.

For a time it seemed that this rule would be observed. Near the close of his famous *Dialogues*, no less a one than Hume himself had prophetically heralded the time that was at hand. As if in solemn, fervent obsequy over the wreck of his philosophic labors, he had written ominous words: "But believe me, Cleanthes, the most natural sentiment, which a well-disposed mind will feel on this occasion, is a longing desire and expectation that Heaven would be pleased to dissipate, at least alleviate, this profound

ignorance by affording some particular revelation to mankind, and making discoveries of the nature, attributes, and operations of the divine object of our Faith. A person, seasoned with a just sense of the imperfections of the natural reason, will fly to revealed truth with the greatest avidity: while the haughty dogmatist, persuaded that he can erect a complete system of theology by the mere help of philosophy, disdains any farther aid, and rejects this adventitious instructor."[1] And when another, who was destined to be greater than he, described the task that was set for him in words no less portentous, it seemed that heaven had been pleased to satisfy the longing desire as requested. "I had, therefore," wrote Kant in the Preface to the second edition of his first *Critique*, "to remove *knowledge*, in order to make room for *belief*."[2] Although the two utterances appeared within eight years of one another, they really are the monuments which mark the overlapping of two succeeding epochs. Whereas the one commemorated the end of a movement of thought, the other presaged the beginning of a quite different way of thinking which was to occupy men's minds for an hundred years and more to come.

Whether or not the nineteenth century really proved to be the answer of heaven to the wistfulness of the preceding period, depends upon the extent to which its leading theories of religion broke fundamentally

with the religious perspective of the Enlightenment and established a more favorable setting for the understanding of the idea of forgiveness in Protestantism. It did produce a trio of distinguished rehabilitators of religion. The names of Schleiermacher and Hegel belong with that of Kant. More than any others in those brilliant days of *Sturm und Drang*, they supplied the principles and the method in terms of which a restatement of the idea of forgiveness actually was attempted.

Religion is briefly defined by Kant as "the recognition of our duties as divine commands."[3] Evangelical Christianity has always regarded the motive and the meaning of life in terms of obedience to and fulfillment of the will of God. But Kant's interpretation of religion had a different starting point. It was the outgrowth of his general philosophical position. In order to "make room for faith," he aimed at the "abolition of knowledge." The celebrated distinction between the *phenomenal* and the *noumenal* worlds provides the background against which to estimate his theory of religion. When Kant set out to abolish knowledge, it was the knowledge of phenomena that came under his critical analysis. The world of phenomena was the world of experience, i.e., the causal sequence of events which manifest themselves to the senses. The sum total of "all possible objects of experience" is equivalent to the whole world of nature

which the Newtonian physics had brought under the sway of mechanical law. The *Principia* had likewise compelled philosophic recognition from Descartes. Both in its empiricist and in its strictly rationalist forms, Cartesianism affirmed the categories and the methods of natural science as exclusive media for the attainment of the knowledge of ultimate reality. To this broad claim of rationalism, Kant addressed himself in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. His well-known conclusion was that true philosophic knowledge is attainable only with respect to that which is capable of being disclosed to us in and through sensory experience. The fundamental conceptions of Newtonian science are thoroughly reliable for the understanding of actual or possible phenomenal experience. But they are either quite useless or dangerously misleading when pressed beyond this reality to include reality as a whole.

Thus, philosophical knowledge of the noumenal world is denied. However, what is unknowable, is not, on that account, unknown. This apparently unmeaning distinction is the heart of Kant's great contribution to the problem of philosophic certainty. To its elaboration the second and third *Critiques* are devoted. Just as men think in terms of time and space, of substance and causality, in ordering their experience as parts of the world of nature, so they are aware of certain things that they ought to do and certain things that they ought to avoid as parts of a world of practical

relations with their fellows. The burden of the *Critique of the Practical Reason* is to vindicate the independent rationality of the moral consciousness, and then to show that what the moral consciousness seems to require actually corresponds with the nature of ultimate reality. "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: *the starry heavens above and the moral law within.*"[4] So runs the celebrated opening of the final section of the second volume of the trilogy. "It is at this point," says Professor Baillie, that Kant "breaks something like new ground in the history of theological inquiry."[5]

Now the essence of this adventure is that the fundamental beliefs of religion are validated by the universal moral consciousness. Tradition had, of course, always maintained a close connection between religion and morality. But the contention was, that the awareness of duty rested upon a prior basis of religious belief. Kant's view is a significant reversal of this order which was destined to determine the approach to the religious problem for several generations. A theological ethic, he held, was wrong in principle because it involved "the endeavor of Reason to infer the Supreme Cause of nature and its properties from the *purposes* of nature (which can only be empirically known)."[6] An ethical theology, however, "leads immediately to religion" because it is "the endeavor to infer that Cause

and its properties from the moral purposes of rational beings."[7]

This transition from morality to religious faith rather than from religious faith to morality presupposed the thoroughgoing destruction of the so-called *traditional* or *speculative proofs* for the existence of God and the world on which the structure of theology had rested until the Reformation, and even thereafter. It inaugurated the celebrated "Moral Proof for the Being of God" which dominated the theology of the nineteenth century and demonstrated how much the man who had seen more deeply than any of his contemporaries into the nature of science was a child of his time in matters of religion. The moral argument affirms that "it is *Reason* by means of its moral principles that can first produce the concept of God."[8] It is built upon the indestructible connection between happiness and virtue, which the most convinced Deist and freethinker would never have dreamed of challenging. Unless the universe is of such a kind that this double end of virtue and happiness is attainable, then, "the moral law also which commands us to promote it is directed to vain and imaginary ends, and must consequently be false."[9] The attainment of this double end is the *summum bonum*.

Thus, Kant's explanation of religion involved a thoroughgoing reconstruction of the role of reason in religion. But the traditional focus of the problem,

namely, the relation between reason and revelation, was fatally neglected. This oversight really meant that Kant's alteration of the eighteenth-century doctrine of reason did not carry him at all beyond the eighteenth-century teaching about the nature of religious faith. He had really limited the prevailing scope of reason and provided faith with a more appropriate rational foundation. It is just this paradoxical aspect of the Kantian theology that marks at once its greatest departure from, and its greatest allegiance to, the theology of the Enlightenment. When, for example, the knowledge of God is denied to scientific speculation but permitted as a moral necessity, the basic understanding of religion is the same. For does not reason proceed, in the one instance, from a fact of sense experience, in the other, from a fact of moral experience? And in both cases, is it not an autonomous reason which, proceeding from *man's* experience—whether in the world of sense or in the world of freedom—ventures the assertion of faith? What of the *trans*-cendentalism of that reason which finds the guarantee of its autonomy in the fact that it can set limits to itself? Is this not precisely that "telling oneself everything" and "allowing oneself to be told nothing" which makes of every philosophical system "a monologue of the thinker with himself"? (Brunner) Surely Kant's very eighteenth-century conception of faith is something other than the vital response

of man to a communication from another than himself, of whom he knows nothing except it be thus communicated!

Kant's own uncertainty is the best witness to this estimate of his religious position. He would, of course, emphatically deny that the activities of the speculative reason and the practical reason can ever amount to the same thing. But what he does not always seem to be sure about is that the argument from duty to the reality of God possesses strict logical cogency. The meaning of this fluctuation is clearly disclosed in the *Opus Posthumum* to which we must turn for final confirmation of the deepest intention and innermost spirit of Kant's theory of religion. Here Kant seems to reject even the moral proof of God's existence, given in the second *Critique*, as being "illegitimately theoretical." "The whole tenor of his argument," says Professor Norman Kemp Smith, "is towards substituting a proof of a more strictly moral character, all the emphasis being laid upon the direct relation in which the Idea of God stands to the moral imperative."[10] And if one inquires how this latest tendency expresses itself, the answer is, not in less rationality in the conception of the moral law, but in a weakening of the transcendental reality of God. "The categorical imperative of the command of duty is grounded in the Idea of an *imperantis*, who is all powerful and holds universal sway. This is the Idea of God. . . . God is not a being outside me,

but merely thought in me. God is the morally practical self-legislative Reason. Therefore, only a God in me, about me, and over me."[11]

Plainly, this is an enunciation of the principle of polarity in the style of the rationalism of the eighteenth century. As a philosophic corrective, and an appropriate answer to the skepticism of Hume, the transcendental standpoint was incisive and relevant. But as a religious corrective, Kant's theory seems after all to be wanting. It attempted a reconstruction of the Deistic conception of Reason while maintaining with slight modification the eighteenth-century conception of faith. The combination of the *new* reason with the *old* faith resulted in a view of religion not fundamentally different from that produced by the *old* reason of Kant's contemporaries. Man and God are still in *polar* relation to one another. The decidedly human shadow cast by this polarity is not dispelled by any clearly distinguishable lines of demarcation. There is apparently still room for the skeptic's annoying question: "Why, on these terms, believe in any God at all?" The verdict of history upon rationalism in religion had fallen again, and essentially in the same way. Religiously speaking, men were still in the age of the Enlightenment. God was as superfluous as ever. He had not been vitally restored to belief by redefining the role of reason in religion. Perhaps some one would attempt a different conception of faith.

In the year 1799, just eleven years after the publication of the great treatise on the Practical Reason and five years before Kant's death, there appeared a series of "Discourses on Religion," addressed to "the Educated Among Its Despisers." The speaker and author was the so-called "father of modern theology," Daniel Friedrich Schleiermacher. In general, the discussion may be said to have aimed at the emancipation of religion from the dominion both of reason and of conduct. Schleiermacher had, of course, not been unaffected by Kant's vindication of the freedom of the human spirit in a world of nature. He also regarded the old rationalistic distinction between reason and revelation as artificial and religiously unfruitful. But Kant's ethical theology seemed to Schleiermacher to result in an altogether unwarranted enslavement of religion. "Piety," he says, "vindicates for itself its own sphere, and its own character only by abandoning entirely the provinces of science and practice; . . . Religion reveals itself as the necessary and indispensable third, as the natural complement of knowledge and conduct, not inferior to them in worth and dignity."[12]

Of all the *Discourses*, the second is by far the most important. It is an address on "The Nature of Religion," and here Schleiermacher's theory of religion found its first expression. As is well known, the independence of religion is derived from the independence

of *feeling* as a phenomenon of the mental life precisely distinguishable from cognition and volition. To the question whether all feeling as such is religious or whether religion is one particular kind of feeling, Schleiermacher does not give an entirely unambiguous answer. This has sometimes led to an interpretation of his work which obscures its true foundation by an overstress upon the development of his ideas. The *Discourses* are held to represent the earlier Schleiermacher and, on that account, to offer less characteristic material than may be gathered from the maturer work on *The Christian Faith*. If one keeps in mind a distinction in Schleiermacher's language, when speaking of religion, namely, that which he makes between *intuition* and *feeling*, one is less likely to miss the real point of connection between the earlier and the later work. What Schleiermacher apparently wants to say is that accompanying the passive reception of sense impressions in mental life (intuition), there is an affective or emotional response to the impression (feeling). The virtual omission, from a second edition of the *Discourses* (1806), of the term *intuition*, and the inclusion of the same idea under the term *feeling* in the major work, allows the conclusion that for Schleiermacher, feeling is the first, immediate, awareness of things which precedes both cognition and conation in the mental life. When this feeling becomes specifically a feeling of *the infinite*, the awareness of being im-

pressed by the universe as a whole, then it embraces the sum and substance of religion. "The common element in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety, by which these are conjointly distinguished from all other feelings, or, in other words, the self-identical essence of piety, is this: the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God."[13]

The status of doctrines and creeds with respect to this feeling of absolute dependence is almost capricious. Religious knowledge is not a sum of doctrines as the orthodox had taught, and the rationalists with them. The doctrines of religion are descriptions of what one has already experienced in religious feeling and later reflected upon. So too, "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech."[14] Schleiermacher himself seems to have gone so far as to advise the theologian not even to concern himself with the description of something like a general or fundamental Christian feeling but to occupy himself solely with the particular religious experience of the time in which he is doing his theological thinking. "Limitation to a certain time . . is undeniable; for every presentation of doctrine, no matter how comprehensive and complete it may be, loses in time its original significance and retains only an historical one."[15] This treatment of *Christian* thought in Schleiermacher's theory of religion is the best disclosure of

the essential spirit of his attempt to revise the conception of faith. If one were not already prepared for the surrender of the independence of the Christian gospel to a thoroughly alien spirit, one would find it difficult to understand. In the name of Christian theology, a man invites his descendants to keep alive and pure the distinction between theology and religion. This invitation is eagerly accepted and for decades to come its author is gratefully extolled. But it does not seem to occur to those who affirm such a distinction that they have really abrogated it. For the true meaning of this way of separating theology and religion is, that anything specifically *Christian* is subordinate to that religion which, "needs no such expression, hardly even to propagate itself; . . . for in the immediacy of religion all is true; for how could it otherwise come to be?"[16]

It was an inevitable, but nevertheless fateful, moment in the history of Protestantism when Schleiermacher replaced Luther and Calvin as the one from whom one was proud to acknowledge one's descent. For this acknowledgment necessarily involved the conviction that the understanding of religion requires first the consideration of what man is like, and after that, and secondarily, the concern for what God is like. Indeed, to know what man is like, is already to know what God is like, since there is no distinction between them, save that between the part and the whole. All is

in God and God is in all, and there can be no impassable boundaries. This is not Christianity but Pantheism, not the religion of the Bible but the religion of polarity. It belongs to the very core of Pantheism, that man speaks much of God but there is never any real discourse between them. For God is never distinct enough and therefore powerless to break the fascinating rhythm of the monologue of human thought. The only barrier to skepticism is the presupposition that God and man are one. And should the skeptic persist in disbelief in such a God, the alternative is belief, however wistful, in the unlimited capacities of Man. For skeptic, pantheist, and transcendentalist are united in the conviction that man is completely at home in the world and the measure of all things. Thus, Schleiermacher succeeded in the very necessary task of rescuing religious faith from disrespect and disregard. But he did it by neither rejecting nor reshaping the cultural pattern of those who despised it. He gave them a more attractive account of their innermost aspirations and told them it was right and proper to believe in them. He did not preach natural religion but a vastly enriched formulation of the fundamental commitment of the Enlightenment to the dignity of man and the polarity between man and God.

Sometimes, if not often, men prefer understanding to riches. This was the case with Schleiermacher's contemporaries. It was not to be expected, therefore,

that his emancipation of faith, ingenious and fascinating as it was, could so quickly dislodge the dominance of reason in religion. Across the hall in the same university in Berlin, a colleague of Schleiermacher's was delighting and confusing the students who had just entered his lecture room from the one opposite, by seeming to contradict everything the great theologian had been saying. The years of the common academic activity of Hegel and Schleiermacher, and those that followed for at least two decades, witnessed the virtual eclipse of the theologian by the philosopher. Indeed, the brilliant Christian apologist had to await the death of "the acknowledged dictator of one of the most powerful philosophic schools in the history of thought,"[17] and the time-wrought disillusionment with this Messiah of the mind, before he should receive his rightful crown of glory. Whereas Schleiermacher had taken up the problem of faith where Kant had left it unaltered from its eighteenth-century form, Hegel took up again the problem of reason in religion, as it had been modified by Kant. Pursuing these modifications to their ultimate consequences, he sought to overcome the religious dilemma of the *Aufklaerung* between rationalism and skepticism. Thus he was, from the first, more in line with the prevailing temper than was his theological colleague in Berlin.

If it can be said of any theory of religion that it is dependent upon some *general* view of life and its

meaning, it is pre-eminently true of Hegel's. One central passion subordinates philosophy and science, history and art, literature *and religion*, to its sovereign sway. The power of reason is sovereign because ultimately everything that *is* is *rational*. The basic axiom of Hegel's philosophy is the identity of thought and being. This identity is expressed in Hegel's system by the conception of Absolute Spirit. Over against Kant's dualism between idea and reality with its skeptical denial that the latter was available to knowledge, Hegel sweeps both dualism and skepticism aside in the confident assertion that idea and reality are one. What Hegel wanted was the restoration of speculation to its rightful position of respect and honor as the only truly worthy activity of the human spirit. He did not mean, of course, the speculation of the older rationalism which extended the scope of sense perception beyond reliability. He affirmed rather the unbridled exercise of the autonomous power of thought in the world, which Kant had recognized in its autonomy but not in its omnipotence. For nothing was more abhorrent to Hegel than the disposition to doubt everything, and nothing more futile than the attempt to demonstrate the primacy and the certainty of perceptual knowledge. The truth is, that reality itself is rhythmical. Absolute Spirit *is*, according to a triple beat which is essentially logical. Its structure is expressed in the Triadic Synthesis of *being*, *not-being*, and *being-for-self*.

This is the key to the understanding of the various areas of our experience. Like logic itself, science and art, morality and history, and religion, are but so many spheres of the Absolute in which it is realizing itself, and in which its characteristic movement is to be recognized.

The interpretation of religion in such a scheme subordinates it completely to philosophy. Hegel was horrified by the suggestion that the judgments of God are unsearchable and His ways past finding out. Indeed, his analysis of religion as *revealed* turns on an analysis of consciousness as a direct negation of "the conclusion that man knows nothing of God." Revelation is really conceptual knowledge which is at once the supreme mode of consciousness and the private domain of philosophy. "It lies essentially in the notion of religion," says the *Philosophy of Mind*, "the religion, i.e., whose content is absolute mind—that it be revealed. . . . Knowledge . . . as infinite self-realizing form . . . is . . . manifestation out and out. . . . To know what God as spirit is . . . requires careful and thorough speculation. It includes, in its forefront, the propositions: God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, his self-consciousness in man, and man's knowledge of God, which proceed to man's self-knowledge in God."[18]

Sometimes, when speaking directly about religion, Hegel seems to argue that religion is prior to philoso-

phy in their common task of providing knowledge of the Absolute, and remains the creative and forward moving force. In a famous passage in the *Philosophy of Right* we are told, "concerning the desire to teach the world what it ought to be" that, "for such a purpose philosophy at least always comes too late. Philosophy, as the thought of the world, does not appear until reality has completed its formative process and made itself ready. . . . When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated. The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering."[19] Yet, as Professor Baillie rightly reminds us, "it is difficult to escape the impression that it is from philosophy rather than from religion that Hegel himself prefers to draw his own spiritual nourishment."[20] It is really in philosophy and not in religion that the spirit of man—and we can also say, the Spirit of God—reaches the climax of its development.

This interchangeability between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God returns us to familiar ground. A century and a half of human aspiration to establish securely man's complete *at-homeness* in the world culminates in the philosophy of Hegel. It included the most comprehensive attempt to overcome the religious dilemma of the Enlightenment. Hegel ventured beyond both Kant and Schleiermacher who had vainly tried to give to the idea of God religious meaning by

expounding, respectively, a different view of reason and of faith than the eighteenth century had known. Seeing that the one-sided efforts of his predecessors had failed, he sought to do both things at once. With one bold stroke he accomplished the culmination of Kant's great discovery of the transcendental power of reason and the fulfillment of the romantic yearning for harmony between the finite and the infinite which had so inspired Schleiermacher. "The truth is the whole," we are told in the *Phenomenology of Mind*. "That the truth is only realized in the form of system, that substance is essentially subject, is expressed in the idea which represents the Absolute as Spirit (Geist)—the grandest conception of all, and one which is due to modern times and its religion. Spirit is the only Reality. It is the inner being of the world, that which essentially is, . . . it is externality (otherness), and exists for self; . . . it is self-contained and self-complete, in itself and for itself at once."[21] The identity between thinking and that which is thought is revealed in the dialectical rhythm of the *act* of thinking itself. It is always within the movement of Spirit that the Kantian distinctions between thought and experience, the theoretical and the practical reason, and the contrasts of Schleiermacher and the Romanticists between inner and outer, finite and infinite, part and whole, are relevant. Hegel sees them all embraced in the synthesis of solid knowledge. Even skepticism

is powerless, since it is within the breast of the conqueror that the enemy resides.

Had the *Aufklaerung* been able to maintain its trust in reason, it would never have wavered in its faith in man. Hegel's urgent desire to eliminate such doubt forever, restored to the central concern of the Enlightenment its critical self-respect. The function assigned to reason in religion was itself a new formulation of religious faith. Hegel's God is the God who can confront the understanding of man with no occasion of stumbling and no foolishness, like that of preaching, since man's relation to this God is one of undisturbed familiarity. So long as religious faith is moored either to conduct or to feeling, it shares that partiality which Hegel so violently abhorred and which foredoomed the previous attempts to get beyond the religious problem of the Enlightenment. Hegel has won the day by understanding the Enlightenment better than it understood itself. He has shown that the *knowledge* of God is exactly equivalent to man's deepest *understanding* of himself. The self-knowledge of God, we have already heard, is "his self-consciousness in man, and man's knowledge of God, which proceed to man's self-knowledge in God." Hegel has found it possible to proclaim to man that faith in Spirit, his own spirit, is the same as faith in God. The Enlightenment had wanted nothing so much as a securely established faith in man. At last its day-star had appeared in him

who compassed all doubt about with certainty because he never doubted himself. He had knowledge of all things because with unshakable conviction he knew himself. Man no longer needed to limp tortuously between the two sides, belief *and* reason. The power of his god had been demonstrated by this most faithful of his prophets. All at once, it had become so embarrassingly easy to believe *in* reason. Now, skepticism seemed so utterly naïve.

The triumph of eighteenth-century religion in the Hegelian theology is the triumph of the principle of identity over the principle of polarity in the relations between man and God. The victory had come not by the introduction of anything new but by the elaboration—finally with complete consistency!—of what, for a very long time, had been old. For identity does not exclude polarity, but rather sets it finally in force. It is, so to speak, polarity with a vengeance. Hegel can contrast God and man without sensing the slightest inhibition. He can also identify them. Difference is as significant for him as likeness, otherness as essence. His philosophy is at once the greatest titanism and the greatest humility, the greatest confidence in man and the greatest confidence in God. He can do what he can, and his philosophy can be what it is, only because he has found a *reason*, which, higher than all reason, has brought him a peace which need not pass all understanding. It is the peace which man derives from the

knowledge that God cannot tell him anything which he cannot tell himself. The Hegelian man is the man who knows everything, including, and above all things, this: that from God he has nothing to fear. He is fundamentally undisturbed by the contrasts which emerge as he thinks, and the otherness and estrangement which he senses. For they are the ongoing movement of the one Absolute Spirit which in spite of all its changes is identical with itself and whose dialectical activity always qualifies the polarity between man and God by the glorious vision of their identity. Such a prospect makes belief in the God of the Reformation transparently superfluous. The Hegelian man welcomes being alone in the world, for he himself, by the power of his own reason, is omnipotent.

Chapter IV

Man Wants Forgiveness

THE DECLINE OF RESPECT FOR THE PARADOXICAL IDEA OF FORGIVENESS IN CHRISTIAN THINKING SINCE THE Protestant Reformation is both symptom and consequence of the rational humanism of the religion of the Enlightenment. A new spirit was abroad in the world for which the rigorous human limitations of a religion of revelation were certain to be distasteful. Since there could be no forgiveness in the Christian sense without revelation, religious thinking and religious aspiration were undertaken on quite other terms and with quite other intentions. The effect of the principle of polarity in narrowing the scope of religion until it became a mere appendix to morality and finally failed to touch the imagination of men at all, was remarkably acute for an age that wanted so intensely to believe in something. The choice between skepticism and atheism to which it was ultimately reduced, was no less tragic because it was inevitable.

Nineteenth-century theological thought, however, turned on an entirely different axis. Philosophic method and philosophic criticism became the points

of departure (instead of the points of reference) for theological exposition. The concern for what was essential to the proper understanding of Christianity was no longer primary. It was natural that men should abandon zeal for that about which they had ceased to care. A changing world required, not a changeless, but a changing gospel. And the change was effected. An ingenious turn of language was adopted which had the great merit of seeming to preserve the gospel's permanence by including it in a category of the vaguest and most general sort. Men of sound learning and true piety exchanged the specific problems of Christian theology for the general problems of the Christian religion. Many decades later, they were to begin to discover that this exchange involved a contradiction in terms which reduced their thoughts to illusions and their shift in terminology to a *tour de force*. Meanwhile, they gave themselves with enthusiasm and eloquence to the careful and elaborate formulation of premises and principles which completely subordinated the species to the genus. Every man could be introduced to the Christian faith by way of a thoroughly self-consistent system of thought in which were included also some thoughts on Christianity. Small wonder that philosophers took possession of what had once been the treasury of the dogmaticians and set the pace for the exposition of Christian ideas. Inevitably those who set out to expound the Christian faith came

forward as philosophers of religion. It was of no consequence that they elected to call their work, *systematic theology*. For system meant the destruction of dogma. Apologetics was no longer a discipline. It had become an art. Perspective was no longer master of technique, but servant. Together with line, and light and shade, it must enrich, not disturb, the systematic harmony.

But the dogmatic tradition, though no longer regulative of theological thinking, remained on purely traditional grounds a part of the materials with which every expositor of Christian truth quite naturally worked. The nineteenth century ended as it had begun in a blaze of theological glory. The restoration of independence and respectability to religion which made Schleiermacher the father of modern theology culminated in an imposing, outspokenly doctrinal, three-volume work. It brought to its author a name that eclipsed that of his distinguished predecessor and became the by-word for the interpretation of Christianity. Albrecht Ritschl always remembered with a kind of predestinarian vividness the night when, as a very small boy, he had been allowed to accompany his father and the aging Schleiermacher whom he was later to acknowledge as his own theological master. To his successors, Ritschl has been vastly more than a memory and a teacher. He is a present reality. For the principles which he enunciated regarding the Christian religion have exhausted all debate and criticism and become the

self-evident axia of the prevailing contemporary theology. Liberalism, as we know it today, is historically and characteristically Ritschlianism. Notwithstanding the attack upon it during the last decade and a half, and the definite break with it in certain learned circles, liberalism may still be said to preside over the chairs of theology in the leading Protestant faculties of the English speaking world. When Wilhelm Herrmann, Julius Kaftan, Ferdinand Kattenbusch, perhaps the most devoted of Ritschl's disciples, were at the height of their influence, the late H. R. Mackintosh, A. E. Garvie, John Oman, John Baillie, the late A. C. McGiffert, the late G. B. Smith, William Adams Brown, Eugene Lyman, E. C. Moore, Henry P. Van Dusen, and others, were either beginning or preparing to assume the leadership of Christian thought.

It is an evidence of the definitive character of the idea of forgiveness in Protestantism, and a tribute to Ritschl's theological eminence, that he set for himself a twofold task. He attempted to turn Schleiermacher's failure to emancipate religion from bondage to the Enlightenment into a positive theological attack. He sought to re-establish theological thinking on its true basis in the theology of the Reformers. Historical and biblical studies convinced him that the only promising instrument for the achievement of these aims was the exposition of the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. "The immediate object of theological cognition," he

tells us at the earliest possible moment in the systematic discussion of the subject, "is the community's faith that it stands to God in a relation essentially conditioned by the forgiveness of sins."[1]

Now this way of putting the matter distinguishes Ritschl's interpretation of the idea of forgiveness from any preceding one. The expressed connection between the forgiveness of sins and the faith of the community is based upon an elliptical understanding of Christianity. In Ritschl's opinion, the full exploration of this characteristic of the gospel determines his contribution to the history of theology. Christianity resembles "not a circle described from a single center, but an ellipse with two *foci*."[2] They are: redemption through Christ; and activity in the Kingdom of God. Whereas the tendency of traditional theology had been to destroy the ellipse by an exclusive stress upon the redemptive work of Christ, Ritschl undertakes to preserve it by reversing the emphasis. It is the idea of the Kingdom of God which assumes a regulative role in his theological thinking and governs the interpretation of the idea of forgiveness and its correlatives.

Although Ritschl himself continues to insist that Christianity is primarily a religion of redemption, there are three constantly recurring emphases in his theology which are derived from the conception of the Kingdom of God, and ultimately contribute to its dominance. To begin with, the idea of the Kingdom

of God underscores the social over against the individual aspects of forgiveness. When forgiveness is represented in terms of the relationship of the individual to his God, the private interest easily becomes exclusive. This interest is assigned a place within a more inclusive whole, when forgiveness is represented in terms of the faith of a community with a destiny. In the second place, the idea of the Kingdom of God makes possible the moral over against the legal interpretation of the relations between God and man in forgiveness. Again and again, Ritschl makes it plain that the great mistake of traditional theology was its description of divine-human relations in terms of a legal adjustment of mutual rights quite to the neglect of the position of the believer as a member of the community established by Christ. The relations between God and the individual who is a member of the Christian community must be interpreted in the light of the category of purpose, i.e., in terms of the intricate and varied interplay of ends and means in the achievement of a common highest end. And finally, the notion of the Kingdom of God significantly determines the structure of Ritschl's theology and his view of forgiveness by assigning to the latter what may be called a definitely historical as against a dominantly otherworldly relevance. This comes about by repeated attention to the relations between God and the community of believers and the world. Forgiveness amounts

to nothing if it cannot be shown to be a present experience shared by men in this world and with definitely recognizable historical consequences. The redemptive love of God made manifest in Christ must give to the men and the movements of history its own characteristic pattern and make them different. This is possible since there exists a community in the world which testifies to the reality and the coming of the Kingdom of God. "These conditions lead us to conclude that the religious conceptions of justification[3] and reconciliation, to be explained, must not be applied in isolation to the individual subject, but to the subject as a member of the community of believers. Nor do they express a change of standing relatively to God without at the same time implying a change of attitude to the world on the part of those who aforetime were sinners."[4]

Unquestionably, the ethical implications of the conception of the Kingdom of God determined Ritschl's theological position more than its social or historical ones. Perhaps this is most strikingly evidenced by an ambiguity from which his discussion of forgiveness is never entirely free. Ritschl thinks of forgiveness both as a religious and as a moral conception without ever making the distinction precise. He tries to do so by maintaining the homogeneity of the idea of forgiveness and the idea of the Kingdom of God. Christ's mediation of forgiveness, the bestowal of Divine Son-

ship and the destination for eternal life; Christ's establishment of the Kingdom of God among men, the achievement of citizenship in the Kingdom through the moral resolve to assist in its realization—these are the fluctuation points of Ritschl's treatment of the Christian teaching about forgiveness. The former are, in his judgment, specifically religious notions; the latter supply the corresponding moral ones, in an interpretation in which the key word is *homogeneity*. This homogeneity can be affirmed because both categories are derived from God's self-revelation in Christ and imply the action of God directly upon men as well as corresponding functions on the part of men toward God and the world. At the same time, forgiveness cannot be said to precede such moral activity without destroying the homogeneity which must necessarily exist between the two foci of the Christian ellipse. Thus, it becomes increasingly plain that the argument swings the pendulum more forcibly in the one direction than in the other. One is hard put to it to avoid A. E. Garvie's judgment that "in his great work the moral aspect of the Christian life is specially included in the idea of the Kingdom of God, and the religious in the conception of forgiveness. The fact, however, that this more complex idea gets the name of the kingdom, is not without effect in giving the moral element predominance over the religious, in putting in the forefront human activity instead of divine grace."[5]

The real root of this tortuous hither and yon lies elsewhere. Undoubtedly, Ritschl desired to establish beyond controversy the sovereign freedom of God in divine-human relations implicit in a distinctly and primarily religious interpretation of forgiveness. He believed, moreover, that his interpretation was the expression of what he desired. But his polemical interests, and, as we shall see, his systematic principles, could scarcely do otherwise than thwart his wish and make an illusion of his faith. From Ritschl's day to this, the ethical and the religious elements in Christianity, respectively, the moral and the spiritual elements in religion, have existed in an embarrassingly tenuous and volatile contiguity. But whenever men have had to choose between virtue and forgiveness as the essence of piety, virtue has carried the day. It has seemed so self-evident, and vastly more persuasive, that the good man was an ideal at once more possible and more desirable than the good theologian.

Reflection upon the good news of forgiveness which proved to be the power of God unto salvation to the Jew first and also to the Greek, included from the beginning the correlative ideas of guilt and faith and imputation. The critical discussion of Ritschl's theological offensive against the Enlightenment on behalf of the dynamic Protestant concern for this gospel turns naturally toward these ideas. The problem is to consider what happened to the traditional structure of

the doctrine of forgiveness as a result of the ambiguous homogeneity which Ritschl affirmed between it and the conception of the Kingdom of God.

In general, the attempt was made to do justice both to the religious and the moral aspects of forgiveness by interpreting the idea together with its correlatives according to the analogy of moral pardon among men. Such an analogy made possible the exposition of the relations between God and men in other than juridical terms. It also permitted the consequences of the redemptive work of Christ to be drawn so that neither the priority of divine grace nor the independent functions of the individual would be hindered. Briefly, Ritschl defines forgiveness as the mediation of Jesus to believers of that intimate communion with God which He himself enjoyed. It expresses the determination of God to admit men, despite their sin, to fellowship with Himself. Divine Sonship and the destination for eternal life follow from it as inner convictions of the believer and are expressed in a definite attitude of freedom over the world.

As an act of God directly upon men, forgiveness is an act of moral pardon. Relations between two men are frequently broken because of an injury that one of them has suffered at the hands of the other. The restoration of the ruptured relation in such a way that the injury is neither forgotten nor denied but simply recognized as inoperative in the continuing

fellowship, is the heart of human pardon. The gesture of restoration must come from the person injured and it must be accepted in full recognition of his guiltiness by the person committing the injury. The moral character of such pardon is determined by the will of the parties to the relation, with the definite purpose of resuming mutual fellowship. Applied to the relations between God and men, it follows, that "the forgiveness of sins as pardon, rather, merely renders inoperative that result of guilt and the consciousness of guilt which would manifest itself in the abolition of moral fellowship between God and man, in their separation or mutual alienation. God, in forgiving or pardoning sins, exercises His will in the direction of not permitting the contradiction—expressed in guilt—in which sinners stood to Him, to hinder that fellowship with Him which He intends on higher grounds."[6]

These higher grounds are supplied by the nature of God's will and the purpose toward which that will is directed. This purpose is *divine* because it is the permanent object of God's will. It is *autonomous* because it is God's own purpose before it becomes an end for the world or for man. Significantly enough, it is not autonomy which is the characteristic mark of divinity but teleology. The attribute of Law-giver must, according to Ritschl, give way before the attribute of Father in the interpretation of the nature of God. Forgiveness, when it is bestowed by a Father rather

than a Judge, overcomes the time-worn antithesis between the priority of grace and the independent functions of the individual in a new and intelligible synthesis. The paternal pardon expresses itself in a judgment which, far from simply acknowledging and confirming a situation already existent apart from it, creates a wholly new and independent situation. In this new situation, the cause of the broken fellowship between God and man is dissipated by the commitment of both to a common purpose.

As a true son of the Reformation, Ritschl held that the Christian revelation brought to men the knowledge of sin as well as the knowledge of redemption. In the terms of his doctrine of forgiveness, this meant that the gracious activity of God involved a concomitant activity on the part of man. Man's activity has a negative and positive aspect. Forgiveness implies both guilt and faith. Guilt, of course, arises from the identical situation which occasions forgiveness. If it is God who forgives, it is man who has disturbed the mutuality of relations between them. Guilt objectifies the responsibility of the offender for his offense. Ritschl accepts this, but holds that it is devoid of theological meaning unless it is connected with the consciousness of the individual transgressor. Guilt cannot be dissociated from the consciousness of guilt. This is the first rule to be observed. A second is like unto it. Guilt and the consciousness of guilt are only intelligible in moral

terms. It is explicitly set down that forgiveness, as the moral pardon intended by the gracious will of God requires, "therefore rather to transpose 'the removal of the separation of sinners from God,' into *the removal of the consciousness of guilt.*"[7]

This transition from formality to actuality, from objectivity to subjectivity, is grounded in the intimate connection in Ritschl's theology between psychology and ethics. If the regulative category of his interpretation of forgiveness is the biblical idea of the Kingdom of God, the constitutive category of his interpretation of forgiveness is the epistemological idea of the value-judgment. As the former is characteristically teleological, the latter is characteristically psychological. The conception of the value-judgment, as Ritschl applies it, unites the traditional psychological trilogy of cognition, affection, and volition. He follows Schleiermacher in the isolation of feeling as the primary element in cognition, and he even goes so far as to regard the will as the effect of which the feeling is the cause. But whereas Schleiermacher had allowed feeling to determine religious knowledge altogether, Ritschl adopted the conception of the value-judgment to express the discipline which thought and will exercise upon feeling in all cognition. A sensation is communicated to the brain by the feeling of pleasure or pain. It is judged as to its nature and its causes, repectively, its relations to other causes, by thought,

and it is judged as to its worth, i.e., whether it shall be appropriated or rejected, by the will. In relation to thinking and feeling, "will as representing the desire for accurate cognition, comes in between."[8] This middle station, however, gives to the will its determining role in cognition. It disciplines feeling, for the individual may regard that as valuable which is directly painful. It governs knowledge, for no knowledge is dissociated from interest, respectively, desire. It is decisive for the whole act of cognition because the question of truth is ultimately a moral question, in the sense that the standard of judgment for all knowledge is the divine will directed toward the end of the Kingdom of God. When the human will is directed toward this end as its own personal end, true knowledge becomes possible to the human spirit. Forgiveness and guilt, then, conceived as two contrasting value-judgments, meet the requirement for all valid religious knowledge. For "the change brought about by reconciliation does not rend the personality in sunder, as is betokened by the fact that the earlier and the later states are combined in a single self-consciousness. . . . That is, one who is later reconciled must, in the state of sin, have been conscious of the penal value of evils, if later he is to be conscious of their saving worth."[9]

The value-judgment restricting the penal value of evils to the consciousness of guilt is the negative aspect of the experience of forgiveness. For such a judgment

presupposes that the subjective independence of the individual and the divine purpose coincide. Only in this sense are punishments legitimate and necessary, and evils intelligible. But in this sense, too, they are always educative, never retributive. For like the Divine act of forgiveness, they are acts of God directed toward men, as means to the realization of His purpose for them, and to lead them to the acceptance of this purpose as their own. In this way, the whole creation, as it were, conspires with the pain of guilt of him who has disrupted personal relations with a fellow, or with God, to provoke him to shame, uneasiness, and mistrust (which is Ritschl's most characteristic word) in the presence of the one he has mistreated. The removal of this mistrust, and its replacement by trust, with respect to the person injured, is the consummation of forgiveness. It means that the sinner can, despite his sin, overcome the feeling of pain about it in a gesture of trust in the Divine assurance that he is pardoned. Then forgiveness actually becomes *his* forgiveness.

The replacement of mistrust by trust in the relations between man and God upon which the consummation of forgiveness depends is the positive aspect of the Ritschlian value-judgment. Ritschl calls this trust, faith. It includes a changed estimate of himself on the part of the believer and a new direction of his will. For the two supporting pillars of Ritschl's temple of mo-

rality—self-conscious will and purpose—must be accorded their place in a right view of faith, as well as in a right view of guilt and forgiveness. Faith, we are told, "regarded as trust, is no other than the direction of the will towards God . . as the highest good."[10] Moreover, "forgiveness effects a change in the consciousness of guilt in this respect, that the feeling of mistrust towards God which is bound up with that consciousness, and the shrinking from Him which results therefrom, are replaced by a consenting movement of the will towards God."[11]

The conception of faith gives to Ritschl's teaching about forgiveness an almost startling concreteness. It is as though the believer could be distinguished by empirical measurements. None of the correlatives of the idea of forgiveness makes more evident the profoundly ethical interest that animates the great theologian's work. The promise of God and the trust of man regarding forgiveness become actual in the direct bearing which faith has upon life in *the world*. The fact that the believer, in every relationship in which he stands to God, also stands in a discernible relation to the world, is the wheel by which the intricate connections and disconnections in Christianity—between religion and ethics, between the activity of God and the activity of man in forgiveness, between the right of Divine Sonship and the blessing of eternal life and activity in the Kingdom of God, between faith and

good works—are delicately balanced. The validity of the Christian revelation rests upon the fact that the redemption brought into the world by Jesus Christ, involving the simultaneous establishment of the Kingdom of God, is the only solution of the problem of the world.

The world is the sphere of the co-existence of nature and spirit. Of this co-existence man is aware (irrespective of the Christian revelation) because he knows himself to be both a part of nature and in opposition to it. Man is both subject to nature and master over nature; limited by it and free of these limitations. He is dependent on the world and exercises lordship over it. The world of nature is the world of divided existence, of multiplicity, of individuality, of cause and effect. The world of spirit is the world where unity is law. It is the domain of totality and personality, of will and end. The world of nature and of spirit are two heterogeneous orders of reality. It is the function of Ritschl's epistemology to unite these two realms, thus overcoming the isolation in which they had been allowed to remain by Kant. "When we mark the attitude taken up by the human spirit towards the world of nature," he says, "two analogous facts present themselves. In theoretical knowledge, spirit treats nature as something which exists for it; while in the practical sphere of the will, too, it treats nature as something which is directly a means to the realization of the com-

mon ethical end which forms the final end of the world." "This is the general law of spiritual life, the validity of which science must maintain if the special character of the spiritual realm of existence is not to be ignored."[12] The tension between spirit and nature arises from the conviction of spirit of its own worth over against the world of nature and from the fact that the world of nature contains every sort of hindrance to the purposive activity of spirit. If, therefore, the value-judgment of spirit is not to be confined to one or another of these limitations and thus really cancel itself, this judgment must mean the claim of spirit to be a whole in its own order, i.e., worth more than the whole world of nature against which it is opposed.

Precisely this judgment is supported by the view of God and man and the world which is presented in the Christian religion. For, "we must either resign the attempt to comprehend the ground and law of the coexistence of nature and spiritual life, or we must, to attain our end, acknowledge the Christian conception of God as the truth by which our knowledge of the universe is consummated."[13] And as if to dispel any possible doubt about it, one reads elsewhere, that "the activity of God becomes to us a matter of conviction through the attitude we take up to the world as religious men."[14] The problem of the intelligibility of the interrelation of spirit and nature and the problem of the intelligibility of the Christian conception of God

converge upon a common point. The category of the world explains both problems because man, in whom the battle of spirit and nature is waged, is a believer in eternal life. Eternal life, which is bestowed upon man in forgiveness, expresses that end which God has for man and for the world, which man by faith makes his own personal aim so that he feels himself "in actual fellowship with the true spiritual God . . . as a whole raised above the world, inasmuch as he proves the spiritual worth of his individuality through his dominion over all possible restrictions arising from the divided world of nature."[15] Conversely, it is just this mastery over the world that marks for man the assurance of his salvation and the assurance that he is forgiven. The new direction of the will which it expresses, certifies to the identification between man's own purposes and God's. It is the permanence of this identification which makes it an attribute of eternal life.

Underlying Ritschl's thought about forgiveness is one presupposition which has hitherto received only casual attention. It has seemed desirable both for facility of presentation and for emphasis to reserve until the last what in this theology is really first. The forgiveness of sins and its appropriation by faith in spite of the consciousness of guilt simply do not exist but for the existence of Jesus Christ. Our own theological memories are still vivid with the host of serious

attempts to get *back to Jesus*, to defend the *Jesus of history* against the *Christ of faith*, and to restrict very considerably, if not eliminate entirely, the elements of *Pauline Christianity* (as though, in the strictest sense, there could be such a thing) from the interpretation of the gospel. They derived their most telling impetus from the tremendous theological stir aroused by Adolf Harnack's *What Is Christianity?* and the less sensational but equally influential *Communion of the Christian with God*, from the pen of Wilhelm Herrmann. Both of these are unthinkable apart from Ritschl's own passion for the historical advent of Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness is the promise of the remission of sins through Christ. So runs a classical Protestant formulation of it. It is to the meaning of this phrase, *through Christ*, that traditional theology dedicated the idea of imputation. In general, the framework which surrounds the place of Christ in forgiveness looks something like this: God, in the judgment of forgiveness, reckons man with a quality which he does not in the remotest sense possess and cannot possess because of his sin. In so doing, God compromised neither His righteousness nor His love, neither His justice nor His mercy. Such a reckoning is possible because of the particular nature of Christ's person and work. God forgives man through Christ, that is to say, what Christ was and had and did in his own right as the Son of God is transferred to man *as if* it were man's own by his own

right. The essential element in the idea of imputation is this accounting to one what is another's, as if it were his own.

Now Ritschl's view of imputation is at one with the theological tradition in holding that the merits of Christ make possible divine forgiveness. The position before God which Christ has *in his own right*, namely, that of Divine Sonship, becomes the position of the believer. But what Ritschl denies is that the position before God which the believer assumes as a consequence of the forgiveness mediated by Christ, is not in the fullest sense of the term a position *in his own right*. Unless man can be thought of as entering, in forgiveness, upon the right of Divine Sonship in a way that is, in kind, identical with Christ's relation to the Father, forgiveness is unthinkable. The specific issue raised by the conception of imputation in Ritschl's theology, therefore, is this: how can the status of Christ before God which comes to the believer in forgiveness be thought of as a *real coming to him* and at the same time as a *real achievement of his*?

Ritschl's answer is predictable. "The formula of the imputation of Christ's righteousness can be extended so as to possess an excellent sense, if we interpret it in the light of other presuppositions than the system of legal relations employed for that purpose by the dogmatic theologians of the seventeenth century."[16] These other presuppositions are two: a moral concep-

tion of the work of Christ in forgiveness; a moral conception of the relation between Christ and his disciples. The one is developed in the teaching of Ritschl under the category of the *ethical vocation* of Jesus; the other, under the already familiar and indispensable conception of the *religious community*. "This is the material content of the righteousness of Christ—the execution of the work of God, the fulfillment of God's commandments, the sacrifice of life in the service of the community. . . . The point at issue is the imputation of the position relative to God which Christ likewise occupies through His practice of righteousness, to those who as His disciples belong to Him through faith, in order that they may be taken up effectively into the love of God."[17]

A man's vocation is the specific avenue of that interrelation between freedom and the moral law in accordance with which the individual becomes a personality. The fact that there are vocations many and various, that a number of them may be discharged by the same individual, "that several of them can exist compatibly with each other in the same individual while others cannot,"[18] does not alter the fundamentally ethical nature of a vocation. The individual purpose and the wider social goal meet in this vocational obedience to the universal moral law so completely, that men without any vocation are seen to succumb to egoism, in one form or another, which is the anti-

pode of moral character. The application of the idea of an ethical vocation to the work of Jesus Christ in forgiveness means that "what Jesus actually was and accomplished, . . He is in the first place for Himself,"[19] and that "He understands the name Christ as the expression of His individual vocation."[20] Here is at once the connection of Jesus with all men and his distinctness from them. The "undeniable features of Jesus' presentation of Himself, especially in the Fourth Gospel," are identical with "the universal rules for estimating other personalities."[21] For the vocation of Jesus, as Christ, establishes for him a particular line of conduct which is, in kind, i.e., both personal and moral, like any other man's. All those who find an occasion of stumbling in the fact that Jesus never married, nor committed the sin of private property, nor obeyed the late eighteenth amendment, are to pause and reflect that these matters did not lie within the province of his particular calling. Likewise, those who are troubled by the fact that Jesus, all too like themselves, had a task to perform, are to recall that his was a vocation that has no fellow in the firmament. Ritschl regards the unique vocation of Christ as "the establishment of the universal ethical fellowship of mankind," and, "as that aim in the world which rises above all conditions included in the notion of the world."[22] The goal which Jesus voluntarily set up as his own is the same as the end which God has set up as

His own and which God wills for mankind and the world. Otherwise, there would be no Christian revelation and no solution of the difficulty in which man finds himself in the world, namely, as spirit in contradiction to nature. The judgment of Jesus, however, that his intention to establish the Kingdom of God is identical with his awareness of himself as the bearer of God's revelation guarantees both the Christian revelation and the answer to the human problem. The identity in the first instance is primarily teleological; in the second, psychological. It is the single self-consciousness of Jesus which, by a value-judgment, determines his decision to take up his work.

Since the establishment of the Kingdom of God is the ethical vocation of Jesus, it is not difficult to see how the existence of the religious community in the world makes possible the transference to his disciples of what Christ was first of all for himself. Faithfulness in the exercise of his vocation is marked by the same attitude of freedom over the world which we have already noted as the characteristic mark of faith. What has to be added now is, that for Ritschl, this faith can only exist in so far as the individual belongs to the religious community. Christ's freedom over the world manifested itself in "patience under suffering"[23] which unites all the varied experiences of his life (his handling of temptations, his meeting of opposition, his power over nature) with his death in a unified view of

his saving activity. His patient endurance of every limitation of his purpose which arose from the world, and the supremacy which he thereby asserted over it, so that even "before the actual terrors of death, He still could not be swayed by any value attaching to the preservation of the natural life,"[24] most effectively discloses the uniqueness of the relation between Christ and God. This power over the world is the expression of that love wherewith the Son loves the Father and the love wherewith the Father loves the Son. It is transferred, through Christ, to his followers, when the attitude of the individual to the world in faith becomes identical with that expressed by Christ in the proper exercise of his vocation. There is no other content to the forgiveness of sins which the individual receives as a believing member of the religious community. "The verdict of forgiveness is therefore not to be formulated in such a way that the community has its relationship to Christ imputed to it, but in such a way that the community which belongs to Christ has imputed to it His position towards the love of God, in which He maintained Himself by His obedience."[25]

The community *belongs* to Christ. It is exactly this way of putting it that makes possible Ritschl's modification of the traditional idea of imputation so that the full priority of Christ and the full personal activity of the individual are both maintained. For this is an affirmation of worth. One belongs to that with which one is identified by means of a judgment of the value

of that to which one belongs. The act by which the individual reckons himself a member of the religious community and the act by which he is given the blessing of forgiveness meet in the act by which Christ discharges his vocation and maintains himself in the love of God. There is real transference here because the value-judgment by which the individual unites himself with the religious community depends in the fullest sense upon the historical and moral authority of Christ. This authority can be transferred because for Christ and the believer there is the same self-consciousness and the same attitude toward the world. What is thus imputed for the sake of Christ comes to the believer not *as if* it were his own, but *actually* as his possession. "That can happen only through a resolve, in which there is included a judgment; this judgment, however, takes the form that the worth which one individual has as the object of love, is imputed to those who in themselves lack this worth, but belong to the person who is the primary object of love. The position of Christ relative to God is imputed to His disciples when God, for Christ's sake, takes them also up into His effective love."[26] This act of love is really God's judgment of forgiveness, in which through Christ, He admits men, despite their sin and consciousness of guilt, into the privilege of eternal fellowship with Himself. This is the act of God's forgiveness by which we become the sons of God—now!

Chapter V

And Man Forgives Himself

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF DYNAMIC PROTESTANTISM, RITSCHL'S RESTORATION OF THE IDEA OF FORGIVENESS TO theology was a momentous achievement. It meant that the dogmatic Christian tradition, despite its markedly comatose condition during the eighteenth century and after, was not only unlikely to expire, but actually possessed remarkable powers of revivification. The systematic discussion of the theological problem was heir to a profound concern for the meaning of human existence, and an unalterable conviction that the gospel of the forgiving love of God in Jesus Christ was the key to it. But Ritschl's exposition is sharply called into question by an examination of the real consequence of his teaching. During the third winter after the one which brought the nineteenth century past its midpoint, the Protestant theological faculty at Bonn was being introduced to a system of theological principles which were destined within two decades to take the true measure of the human need for divine forgiveness. The needs of men are never more profound or more pressing than when they issue in de-

sires. And the desires of men are never more indicative of insatiable human unrest than when they provoke self-gratification. The startling fact is that Ritschl's interpretation of the idea of forgiveness and its correlatives, contrary to his own intention, followed precisely this course from need to fulfillment. Fundamentally, the most appropriate critical superscription with which to adorn the portal of Ritschl's theological reconstruction is this: *man wants forgiveness: and man forgives himself.*

This evaluation may be proved, on the one hand, by reference to Ritschl's estimate of those who vainly pioneered before him in the emancipation of religion from the eighteenth-century principle of polarity; and on the other, by the intimate connection between his doctrine of forgiveness and his theological method.

Although Kant and Schleiermacher may be said to have exerted a more extensive and a more positive influence upon him, it is under the spell of Hegel that Ritschl began to assert his intellectual independence and to become aware of his academic competence. He "never completely adopted the standpoint of the absolute philosophy." For, although as a student, "he familiarized himself with the conceptual world of Hegel, it nevertheless became but the form of his thought. His innermost convictions were not yielded to its service. . . . The ethical kernel of his world-view he never sacrificed to intellectualism."[1] When

Ritschl later came to develop the important historical antecedents of his view of forgiveness, he confined the discussion of Hegel and his followers to one relatively brief paragraph.[2] There is nothing new in what it contains. It points out how the confusion among the followers of Hegel with respect to the interpretation of Christian doctrine is rooted in the speculative nature of Hegel's approach to religion. The effect of this approach has been the removal of the Christian gospel from all practical relevance to the affairs of men. The identity of thought and being, which is the controlling principle of Hegelianism, works itself out religiously in highly abstract speculation which makes a logical whole but does not accord with the content of the Christian revelation. For, there is no adequate account of God's relation to the world, and the historical incarnation is emptied of its really personal, and therefore, of its redemptive character. To this extent, Hegelianism destroys the possibility of correct theological thinking.

But the familiar contents of Ritschl's paragraph about Hegel cannot conceal a highly important omission. The commentary is so thoroughly absorbed by the attack upon the speculative interpretation of Christian dogma that the perilous theological implications of the principle of identity are altogether ignored. It could, of course, scarcely have been otherwise. For the nineteenth century has placed posterity greatly in

its debt because of the barrier which it erected both against skepticism and against rationalism in matters of religion. This debt, however, is certain to become a liability unless the full meaning of Ritschl's oversight with respect to Hegel is comprehended. It cannot be lightly regarded that Ritschl should be very vocal on the point at which Hegel is farthest removed from the *Aufklaerung* and very silent on the point at which he stands definitely in the eighteenth century. When he directed his attack upon Hegel against the less significant element in his view of religion, namely, its speculative character, it meant that the really critical implications of Hegelianism for the understanding of forgiveness were overlooked. Since the idea of forgiveness was not important for Hegel, Ritschl could proceed with the development of his own doctrine as though neither Hegel's logic nor that of the Enlightenment had any admonitions to present.

The break with Hegelianism did not cut the Gordian knot which bound nineteenth-century religious thought to the eighteenth-century principle of polarity. But it did increase Ritschl's interest in those who eschewed speculation as unsuited to a meaningful interpretation of human experience. From these new associations he secured the nourishment of that innate ethical outlook which had always prevented him from becoming a thoroughgoing devotee of the absolute philosophy. Chronologically, it is Schleiermacher who replaces

Hegel as the chief guide toward that which Ritschl was seeking. Schleiermacher's distinctive contribution to the religious thought of the nineteenth century was his comprehensive attempt to restate the traditional Christian doctrines in terms of the subjective functions of the individual. It is true, of course, that when Ritschl came to define the area in which the religious activities of the human spirit were grounded, he abandoned Schleiermacher's exclusive reliance upon feeling, and substituted volition. In the relationships between the human ego and the existence of objects that oppose themselves to it, Ritschl differentiated between *knowledge*, as the absorption (*Hereinnehmen*) of the existence of these objects into the Ego, and *willing*, as the action (*Hinaussetzen*) of the Ego toward the existence of such objects. Since the will, as the locus of religion, has for its object not only itself but the absolute, the nature of which must, of course, be explained, Ritschl was led to formulate the following systematic definition of religion as his earliest: *Religion ist das Sich-selbst-wollen im Absoluten.*[3] Religion is the absolute self-willing of the self.

If this definition were only the first word in interpreting the relations between Ritschl's theory of religion and that of Schleiermacher, it would be much less crucial. But it is in a very real sense also the last word. For it is not accidental that one can simply substitute for the verb, *wollen*, the verb *fuehlen*, and

thereby have said what the father of modern theology would have wanted to say most of all about religion. Ritschl has disclosed himself to be a true son of this father. The structure of theological thought for both of them is not only determined by their theological method, but by the *same* theological method.[4] The nature of volition has different psychological and philosophical implications than has the nature of feeling. They are the implications which separate Schleiermacher from Hegel and from Kant, and Ritschl from them all. But the foundation is the same, and the theological implication is the same. Their common theological method derives its meaning in the last analysis from the fact that the inner springs of human nature are identical with the divine. Not that the relations between these two natures are devoid of contrasts. They are replete with them. But these contrasts are always more akin to polar opposites that are embraced by an underlying unity than to the radical intersection of perpendiculars. There is no room for the paradoxical character of the early Christian insights into divine-human relations where the passion for intelligibility returns the interpreter again and again to the "foundation of empirical psychological observation."[5] With Schleiermacher, as with Hegel, Ritschl's critical emendations seem to point toward those features of the religion of the Enlightenment which had proved fatal to the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. Unless the

treatment of Kant can be said to include a solid protest, it will be difficult to regard Ritschl's exposition of the idea of forgiveness otherwise than as tending to uphold the religious principles of the Age of Reason.

The theology of Ritschl is virtually a restatement of the critical philosophy in Christian terms. Ritschl did, of course, depart from Kant in some important respects. His doctrine of revelation enabled him to affirm what the Koenigsberg philosopher could only regard as a postulate of the practical reason, namely, the reality and the intelligibility of God. The regulative use of an epistemology in theology allowed him to overcome the skepticism inherent in Kant's dualism. He thereby established the subjective as well as the objective certainty of Christian faith. But neither of these can overshadow Ritschl's essential agreements: the distrust of speculative theology which culminated in the outspoken rejection of the traditional arguments for the existence of God; the demonstration of the intelligibility of the Christian revelation in terms of the distinction between nature and spirit, not even the language of which is altered from that of Kant; and the analysis of the will as the capacity of the human spirit for self-direction toward an end, which is the copestone of Ritschl's ethical theory.

It is, however, the analysis of Kant's relation to the *Aufklaerung* which makes the connection between Ritschl's Kantianism and the religious principles of the

Enlightenment plain. Ritschl sees that Kant's theory of religion is an attempt to improve on the eighteenth-century impoverishment of the idea of forgiveness and its correlatives. "The rigor," he writes, "with which Kant affirmed the binding character of the law and the clarity with which he demonstrated the ethical character of the same as inherent in the accompanying notion of freedom, show not only the conquest of the principles of the *Aufklaerung* but at the same time the renewal of the ethical standpoint (*Weltanschauung*) of the Reformation."[6] Nevertheless, the consequence of Kant's analysis is "that the critical principles of morality are dogmatized and used as the exhaustive conditions for the moral consciousness and moral action."[7] Ultimately, therefore, the full discussion of the idea of forgiveness would involve Kant in the denial of the connection of the principle of freedom with the idea of the good. According to Ritschl, it is the doctrine of radical evil which makes this contradiction evident. Kant successfully disposes of the naturalistic interpretation of original sin while recognizing that "the tendency toward evil operates in man as early as ever the use of freedom in man expresses itself."[8] But since freedom is the ground of the recognition of the categorical imperative, Kant must ultimately affirm also that the principle of freedom is the ground of its opposite, the refusal to recognize the moral law as binding. This can only mean that he has pursued the implications of his

moral principles so far that, in the last analysis, it remains possible for a bad man to make himself good, since respect for the moral law continues despite the evil tendency. We ought to be better men, and therefore, we can be. "In the same way, Kant also transforms the idea of forgiveness, the necessity of which he at first recognized . . . into the idea that the changed person forgives himself on the ground of the self-confidence which is rooted in his freedom. . . . In this interchange, the basic mistake of Kant's interpretation of religion is contained."[9]

This judgment of Ritschl's turns on the precise point of connection between religion and morality. In view of what has already been said, it becomes particularly pertinent to inquire what he himself is able to do about this inevitable consequence of the ethical dogmatism of his philosophical master. Does Ritschl's assertion of the independent authority of religion carry him beyond the critical philosophy and free him from adherence to the religious principle of the Enlightenment?

It will be recalled that the conception of the Kingdom of God supplies the law of the coexistence of spirit and nature in the world. This law, according to Ritschl, overcomes the Kantian dualism because it meets the conditions of true knowledge. It comprehends "the world as a whole" by subsuming nature and spirit under the all-inclusive purpose of God, a teleology which expresses the "necessary data of the spiritual life of

man."[10] When "Christianity lays down the principle that personal life is to be prized above the whole world of nature,"[11] it does so as a value-judgment of the individual. Ritschl insists that such a judgment can be made because of membership in the religious community. But his analysis indicates that it could also be made by the individual as a spirit over against nature. One might put it like this: the significant thing about spiritual life in a world of nature is not its dependence upon the Christian revelation in order that the functions of spirit may become possible and meaningful, but rather that these functions are possible of themselves, and subsequently derive their meaning from the Christian revelation. This independent possibility arises from the central element in the nature of spirit, namely, the capacity for making value-judgments. Kant lacked the proper epistemological analysis of the relations between nature and spirit and could not see how the Christian revelation was really correlative with these relations. Ritschl, not Kant, discovered the law of their correlation.

However, in view of the real basis of Kant's theory of religion, the theological importance of the value-judgment as a safeguard against ethical dogmatism diminishes. Kant finally affirmed that the theological postulates of the critical principles were not transcendental to them but immanent within them. Ritschl began by telling his students that "the theological

ethic recapitulates . . . the general ethical material from the perspective which perhaps the philosophical ethic reaches at its conclusion."[12] Whence comes this sublime detachment of religion from morality? From no other source than the right theory of knowledge! And what is there, really, to choose between an epistemological and an ethical dogmatism? Theologically speaking, there is nothing to choose. For the latter ends in the identity between the divine and the human spirit, and the former begins and continues with their correlation. Neither dogmatism would have been possible except on the platform of the eighteenth-century way of viewing the relations between God and man. God is still very much God, to be sure, and even the initiator of these relations. But man is also very much man, so much, indeed, that he has a reservoir of capacities of his own upon which he can and dares to depend. He can even initiate these relations. And the venture is no longer bold, but quite natural, when man and God are polar opposites. If such a man can make himself good, he can also forgive his own sins, for the more profoundly he fathoms his own necessities, the more appropriately he worships his own God. It seems that with respect to Kant the situation is the same as with Schleiermacher and Hegel. Ritschl's theory of religion departs in vital respects from those of each of his predecessors. But it has one fundamental likeness to them all. The principle of polarity is so central to

his own theology that he not only did not discover it in his teachers, but believed that he could rise above their failures by an extensive effort to restore meaning to the idea of forgiveness on the very basis on which the Enlightenment had discarded it.

The historical inference that Ritschl's theological principles are ill-calculated to safeguard his interpretation of forgiveness from the charge that it is really a doctrine of self-forgiveness is imposing but not of itself convincing. Indeed, the mere suggestion is so foreign to Ritschl's aim and so remote from anything the company of his disciples could be brought to admit that it seems like an idle conjecture. But if some of them now claim to be genuinely religious without the idea of God, and others are still devoted to the rational demonstration and the practical realization of the Beloved Community in a world which seems to be more and more under the dominion of the spiritual hosts of wickedness, even in heavenly places, the explanation is, in part at least, to be sought in the precarious intimacies between reason and faith, religion and virtue, which Ritschl's historical errors inadvertently permitted. If contemporary humanism cannot be significantly distinguished from contemporary liberalism, the reason is largely supplied by Ritschl's application to the Christian conception of forgiveness of the theological method which he had learned from Schleiermacher.

The strategic importance of Ritschl's theological

method together with his own very characteristic formulation of it, urge the direct, though lengthy, citation of it here:

Dogmatics comprehends all religious processes in man under the category of Divine grace, that is, it looks at them from the standpoint of God. But it is, of course, impossible so thoroughly to maintain this standpoint in our experience, as thereby to obtain complete knowledge of the operations of grace. For the standpoint of our knowledge lies in formal opposition to God. Only for an instant can we transfer ourselves to the Divine standpoint. A theology, therefore, which consisted of nothing but propositions of this stamp could never be understood, and would be composed of words which really did not express knowledge on our part. If what is wanted is to write theology on the plan not merely of the great deeds done by God, but of a system representing the salvation He has wrought out, then we must exhibit the operations of God—forgiveness, regeneration, the communication of the Holy Spirit, the bestowal of blessedness in the *summum bonum*—in such a way as shall involve an analysis of the corresponding voluntary activities in which man appropriates the operations of God. . . . If what is intended in Dogmatics is merely to describe objectively Divine operations, that means the abandonment of the attempt to understand their practical bearing. For apart from voluntary activity, through which we receive and utilize for our own blessedness the operations of God, we have no means of understanding objective dogmas as religious truths. Objective knowledge in this region is

disinterested knowledge. . . . Merely objective delineation, therefore, far from exhausting theological cognition does the work in a most inadequate fashion. Whoever thinks that the method to be followed in this book is such as to evaporate the truths of Christianity and expose them to perils of doubt, betrays in the last resort the paucity of his religious experience, and especially his ignorance of the fact that the more objectively the truths of Christianity are handed down in narrative form, the closer at hand will religious doubt be found.[13]

Theology, in short, must be intelligible. It can be intelligible only if its several propositions can be shown to correspond with definite subjective functions of the individual. A theology which has met both these conditions is scientific. One could put it like this: the validity of dogmatics is determined not by its *specific theological* but by its *general psychological* relevance. Only that theology is reliable which conforms to the general laws of human conduct and human knowledge, for apart from these, i.e., a right theory of knowledge and voluntary activity, it could never be understood. The definition of Christianity as "the perfect spiritual and moral religion," is a scientific theological definition because it expresses adequately these very scientific principles. As a good Kantian, Ritschl accepted the transcendental basis of the morality and spirituality which are thus affirmed in Christianity. As a theologian, he holds that what Christianity supplies by way of com-

pleting the scientific explanation of religion is to be called by the term *revelation*. But, however much these considerations may be held to support the genuine priority of God in divine-human relations, the basic fact cannot be obscured that their real meaning is derived from the functions of the human spirit as spirit.

Ritschl, therefore, does not need even for an instant to transfer himself to the standpoint of God. For the standpoint of God is so thoroughly correlated with the standpoint of man in a proper epistemology that there can be only formal, i.e., conceptual opposition between them. The idea of God is related to the idea which the human spirit has of itself, as the idea of the final all-inclusive end for man and the world is related to the narrower particular ends that must mark the activity of spirit as spirit. Ritschl's epistemology guarantees that these contrasts never become contradictions because it is psychologically not theologically oriented. "Ontology," he tells us, "and psychology mutually presuppose each other and their results harmonize."[14] These results are deep, and as the premises of a theology, critical. In the last analysis, they mean that Christian truth is validated not by the activity of God but by the activity of man. The self-activity of the human spirit which is the primary element in the Kantian ethic has become the pivotal condition of intelligible (and hence, scientific, legitimate) theology. This self-activity, to be sure, is always thought of as

being directed toward an end which is transcendental to it. But just at this point the nerve of Ritschl's conception of theological procedure becomes fully exposed. Theologically speaking, the Ritschlian transcendence is intended to safeguard the activity of God as prior to and necessary for the activity of man. An arc is described from this point which should swing from God to man. Actually, however, Ritschl's fluctuations, now from the one side, now to the other, tend to swing the arc from man to God. It becomes increasingly apparent, as one follows Ritschl's argument through page after page, that what is important is not where he begins and what he intends, but where he ends.

A careful examination of where Ritschl ends makes the direction of the pendulum quite evident. At two points in particular, the perilous consequence of the psycho-epistemological method in theology provokes analyses which are as startling as they are telling. The one is an outgrowth of the conception of guilt, the other touches the core of the conception of imputation. The full significance of the value-judgment of mistrust which attends the individual's consciousness of guilt before God appears in the modification which follows in the analysis of human sinfulness. When Ritschl rejects the notion of original sin, "regarded as the expression of a bias . . . which exists in every individual by a natural necessity,"[15] in favor of the notion

of "sin as ignorance," he does so for the positive reason that the latter corresponds to the general features of the moral life which are the substance of Ritschl's alteration of the orthodox tradition. "The only way," he tells us, "in which an idea of sin can be formed at all is by comparison with an idea of the good."[16] Like the good, sin is the "principle of the will's direction."[17] Although it is the opposite of the good, it "has its sufficient ground in the self-determination of the individual will."[18] On any other ground "it would indeed have a very limited extent in actual experience."[19] But now when we take up this "standpoint in our experience," what conclusions must be drawn concerning the nature of sin?

Sin as ignorance is not intended to detract in any way from the full significance of the mediation of Christ to his community. But the fact is that it does. The really indispensable requirement for the correct appraisal of the conception of sin is the self-activity of spirit toward its ends and the ends of other spirits. Therefore, "the subject of sin, rather, is *humanity as the sum of all individuals* in so far as the selfish action of each person . . . leads to the association of individuals in common evil."[20] Therefore, sin is ignorance, for "ignorance is the essential condition of the conflicts which arise between the will and the order of society regarded as the standard of the good."[21] And what is most important of all, "therefore, neither a

priori nor yet in accordance with the conditions of experience, is it to be denied that there may be a sinless development of life."[22] No eighteenth-century theologian could have desired more from the Christian Church than the admission of the possibility of human sinlessness! Clearly, it is not the mediation of Christ to his community, but the development of life in accordance with the general laws of human self-activity that ultimately governs the nature of forgiveness. When the barrier between sin and sinlessness is reduced to the purposive activity of spirit as spirit, then forgiveness ceases to govern religious thought and aspiration.

The orthodox conception of imputation was predicated upon the insight into the incomparable *uniqueness of Christ*. The fate of this insight, when the protective doctrine of the two natures and the three offices was replaced by the more intelligible category of the *ethical vocation*, is almost predictable. Two already familiar declarations may serve as the point of departure. The one is, that "what Jesus actually was and accomplished, . . He is in the first place for Himself";[23] and the other, that "Christ is *necessarily unique in His own order*."[24] Both of these statements seem directed toward the position that the historic mediation of Christ is the ground of that forgiveness which enables men to take the proper view of the co-existence of nature and spirit in the world. But, in each instance,

it is the very next sentence that foreshadows the disastrous prediction. "Every intelligent life moves within the lines of a personal self-end."[25] "If a second could be produced who, really, was on a level with Christ in grace and truth . . . he would yet stand in historical dependence upon Christ, and therefore, logically, would be subordinate to Him."[26] What do the priority and the uniqueness of Christ mean in the light of the unmistakable inference that every life is in itself capable of being that which Christ actually was in himself? This really: that both what Christ was in himself and his logical superiority are significant in so far as they are related to the *general* functions of spiritual and moral activity. The difference between Christ's fulfillment of his vocation and the achievements of the rest of men in their vocations is not nearly as significant as the fact that they are *both*, in so far as they have meaning at all, *ethical* vocations. When the line between the Mediator and those to whom he mediates is as thin as this line clearly is, one can go imperceptibly across that line from the one to the other. And what is far more dangerous, there is nothing formidable enough to prevent one from erasing that line altogether and becoming a mediator himself. Just as it is not important that one will always be a *second*, so long as one is a second *mediator*, so it is not important how one is forgiven, so long as one has forgiveness.

On these terms, what, in the last analysis, can prevent man from forgiving himself?

We who have witnessed the complete disintegration of the orthodox Christology in the intelligible theologies of scientific theologians ought to know the answer. The historical uniqueness of Jesus will always be persuasive in a world peopled with potential Christs so long as these remain fascinated by their own possibilities. It will be natural, and so understandable, to exhort them to pursue with increasing zeal the progressive realization of their capacities. And they will grow in the enjoyment of the exercise of charity toward all those whom they suspect of being behind them in the race. Forgiveness like that is inspiring beyond words. But when it begins to be apparent that these aspiring incarnations are more potential than redemptive, and their charities are more professional than promising, the very number of them will give them away. These pestilential Messiahs will continue to hear what their scribes and pharisees expound, but with the impotence of those utterly devoid of conviction. Those who have been wounded by their transgressions and bruised by their iniquities will perceive the outlines of a false forgiveness with the eye either of agony or of contempt. Eventually disillusionment will overtake the listless and nourish the despairing, to destroy them both, or to deliver them.

Even Ritschl's sharp rejoinder, as though he himself

sensed the implications of his methodology, will not stem the tide of this denouement. "The sapient persons," he wrote, "who thus prefer the charge that I . . . make religion a subordinate appendix to morals . . . would do better to acquire a thorough knowledge of the elementary distinction between the *ratio essendi* and the *ratio cognoscendi*, instead of sitting in judgment on me."[27] But if psychology and ontology mutually presuppose one another, and their results harmonize, this familiar logical distinction between the order of being and the order of knowledge must be regarded as a confirmation, not as a disruption of that harmony. Ritschl's recourse to it is not a qualification but a defense of his exposition of the relations between man and God in forgiveness. The weight of emphasis in his own theology betrays his logic by surrendering it to the eighteenth-century principle of polarity. Again and again, it has become clear that on this principle it is impossible so to demarcate the divine from the human in the relations between God and man as to prevent the interpreter of them from starting at either end quite indiscriminately. Ritschl's critics, whether or not they understood the *logical* implications of his thought, understood its *theological* implications at this point better than he did himself.

The conscientious theologian, henceforth, will take the pulse of piety more accurately. He will be doubly forewarned by what Ritschl has done and left undone.

When he is tempted to defend the insights of theology by the nuances of logic, he will remember that behind the influences emanating from the classroom at Bonn and molding theological thinking far and wide, there lay two centuries of imposing protest against the speculative dangers of rationalism. But when the attempt is made to avoid these dangers by psychologizing logic for theological purposes—otherwise, why should "every theologian as a man of science be required or obligated to work in accordance with a definite theory of knowledge"?[28]—the contemporary interpreter of Christian truth will be vividly aware of the fact that neither at Bonn, nor at Berlin, nor at Koenigsberg, nor in the bishoprics and parishes of England was it possible, during those same centuries, to deliver the theological problem from ways of thinking which accompanied the destruction of the dominion of reason in religion with the destruction of religious faith as well. Ritschl's great mistake was the failure to discern that the ontological mutuality of psychology (and, of course, of logic too) and theology was theologically vicious. On that basis, it will always be a cogent observation that the Christian will begin with the historic mediation of God in Christ, and that the non-Christian, if he is really giving an accurate, intelligible account of his existence as a spirit in the midst of nature which opposes him, will and must reach the point at which the laws of his self-activity are seen to coincide

with the laws of his being. God has done in Christ what man knows himself also to have done in Christ. What decorum requires of the Christian, common sense will demand of the pagan. But the unheard-of miracle of forgiveness which once united Christian preaching and Christian piety in victorious vitality both violated decorum and baffled common sense. It is the contradiction of the deepest desires and most active purposes of eighteenth-century religion which, within eight decades after its skeptical repudiation, culminated in the triumph of the complete at-homeness of men in the world over the compassionate displeasure of God with the world. This triumph is the conception of self-forgiveness. The theology of Ritschl proves nothing so much as this: that as long as theological significance is attached to the mutuality between psychology and ontology, the promise of the forgiveness of sins through Christ will ultimately be reduced to a contradiction in terms. The independent insights of theology will be surrendered ultimately to the philosophical requirements of ethic, epistemology, and metaphysics. But if the only significant ontological mutuality is and remains theological in the strictest sense of the term, then, the promise of the forgiveness of sins through Christ will be the paradox it was in the beginning and ever has been in those high moments of theological achievement which have inaugurated a reformation in the thought and practice of the Church

of Jesus Christ on earth. Then, no matter how stubbornly man's understanding resists the paradox and how desperately his need of and desire for forgiveness persist, man can never give himself to the illusion that he can forgive himself.

Chapter VI

The Illusion Is Shattered

Because I can discover in that undertaking,[1] only a new promotion of the line Schleiermacher—Ritschl—Herrmann, and because in every conceivable advancement of that line, I can only discover the clear destruction of Protestant Theology and the Protestant Church, because I can no longer see a third alternative . . . between the grandeur and the misery of a natural knowledge of God in the sense of the Vatican and a Protestant Theology which has finally freed itself from that secular misery by nourishing itself from its own source and standing upon its own feet, therefore, I can only say here, "No!"[2]

FROM THE PREFACE TO KARL BARTH'S MATUREST WORK, THERE COMES THIS CATEGORICAL DEMAND UPON MODERN Protestantism to search its heart and try its thoughts. It is a sweeping indictment of a gifted company of descendants of the Reformation for trifling with their birthright. Like the Reformation itself, the theology of Karl Barth is a reaffirmation of the great original theological treatise on the gospel of forgiveness, the epistle by Saint Paul to the Romans, and an analysis of its effects upon contemporary culture and religion.

Seven editions of the *Roemerbrief*, and two of the *Dogmatik*, together with an imposing body of literature from a company of distinguished scholars have made the hypothesis of post-war disillusionment at once too naïve and too facile an explanation of the genesis of the theology of crisis. The sheer impact of the movement upon a spiritually decadent generation compounded with the increasing impotence of the principal forms of contemporary religious thought and practice has made the counter-charge of an escapist orthodoxy too superficial and too eager a characterization of its exodus. The current, mortal conflict between the renascent Christianity of the Reformation and fascist totalitarianism has lent a more terrible urgency to the new demand for a critical re-appraisal of the strategic insights of Protestantism.

The beginning must be made with the indictment which Barth has pronounced and diligently labored to defend. Whatever may happen ultimately to the movement associated with Barth's name, one contribution is securely established. The bondage of Protestantism to the religious principles of the Enlightenment has been broken by the force of a new theological method. Whether the twentieth-century heirs of the Reformation can, or will, recover thereby the peculiar genius of their legacy is a secondary question. They can, in so far as the new methodology facilitates the representation of the dynamic Protestant and original Christian

paradox of the forgiveness of sins. They will, in so far as they are not so completely the children of illumination, devoid of all sensitivity to the darkness of their despair. So long as the darkness and the light are both alike only to God, the primary duty of the children of bondage is the abandonment of the hankering after the fleshpots of Egypt in the faithful pursuit of whatever leadership promises to restore them to the land appointed for them from the beginning. The call of deliverance is known in the waning glamour of idolatry. When the illusion is shattered, the painful unrest of the truth that makes men free is on.

The passage which registers Karl Barth's repudiation of the ruling theological tendencies between himself and Herrmann and those who preceded, contains also the definition of his controversy. He accuses them of a frivolous disregard of the actual mutuality between theology and ontology. They are methodologically committed to the discussion of the problem of being in analogical, as against existential, terms. They are "toying with the analogy of being" (*analogia entis*). Nineteenth-century thought is aware of the immense contrast between God and man. But this whole sequence of theological writing presupposes an ultimate continuity of being between God and man as the basis of their intercourse. There is always something which can be affirmed about man for which he is not with ultimate practical seriousness dependent upon God,

but which he himself brings, as it were, in his own name, and by his own right, to the relations between them. Some attribute of man's being, if it is only that he is *homo*; some aspect of his nature, though it be nothing more than his distinctness from the brute creation; some capacity for emotion, or cognition, or volition—is ultimately presupposed as indispensable to his communion with God. When one has looked carefully into the premises, the consequences, and the essential spirit of this entire theological tradition, the final word to be said is that man can always "recognize himself and God's revelation in this continuous, already existing (*vorfindlichen*) relation between God and man . . ."[3] The Reformation insight, however, into the relations between God and man in forgiveness is thoroughly remote from such a habit of mind. "Not a *being* (*Sein*), that the creature has in common with the Creator, despite all dissimilarity, but an act, that is not contained in any mere theory, the human decision in faith, in spite of every dissimilarity, is analogous to the decision of the grace of God,"[4] by which the promise of the remission of sins through Christ is bestowed.

The idea of an analogy of being is in exact correspondence with the principle of polarity which regulated the religion of the eighteenth century. It is not strange that as a good theologian, Barth should be most explicit at the point where theology deserted the Re-

formers and became *modern*. The second volume of his collected papers throws more light on the historical perspective upon this break with the *Aufklaerung* than any of the major treatises, because of two essays which it contains. One of them bears the title: "The Word in Theology from Schleiermacher to Ritschl"; the other is called simply, "Schleiermacher."[5]

In the first discussion, the conception of the Word of God is used to affirm the divine sovereignty over against every human self-determination. "By the problem of the Word," we are told, "i.e., of course, the Word of God in theology, I understand the question whether and in how far theology is aware of its task of guiding the Christian sermon so that what God Himself tells man about Himself is repeated in the words of man, as against everything that man may tell himself about God."[6] This problem has a double aspect, namely, psychological and historical. Speaking historically, the question is, whether "the truth of God stands over against man also in history as a reality which is distinct from him, which approaches him absolutely . . . whether revelation is history . . ." or whether, "history is revelation, because and in so far as it pleases man to look at history, to declare God to be in history? Does man have access to divine truth in history just as he has, or believes himself to have access to the truth of history in general, namely, so that he interprets history in the light of that which is

or already has become the truth within himself?"[7] Speaking psychologically, the question is whether man stands over against the Word of God as "over against the truth of God . . . that must really come to him . . . as one who does not know and therefore, as one who must listen and obey because he is not supreme over it . . . or whether he stands over against the Word, so that it does not first of all have to come to him because he knows and has it already, since it somehow or other is or already has become his own. . . ."[8] But whether Barth speaks psychologically or historically, the question is always the same, and the answer too. "In the one case as in the other, we are concerned whether between God and man a contradiction occurs that cannot be suspended for an instant in any other way except by God, or whether one will think of man in such a way that he himself has the power, whether because of a predisposition or an affinity does not matter, to suspend this contradiction."[9] In the one case, the only fundamental ontological consideration is theological, in the other, ontology and psychology mutually presuppose one another, and their results harmonize. "On the whole, the decision . . . has resulted so that man was assigned more or less confidently a power over a God: over a 'God within himself,' who then proved himself to be identical with a 'God in history.' "[10] This is the line from Schleiermacher to

Ritschl to Herrmann against which Barth has directed his categorical *No!*

The essential spirit of the theology of Schleiermacher is revealed, according to Barth's analysis, in the conception of Christian preaching and of the function of the preacher. The word which most adequately describes them both is *self-mediation* (*Selbstmitteilung*). What the preacher must do is mediate himself in the form of speech. Not himself as an individual, to be sure, for the truth which he is to speak about is given in that life which he shares with all members of the community of Christ. That life is "the empirically given reality of the life which already exists . . . beyond knowledge and action in feeling."[11] Consequently, it is the goal of the preacher to "transmit his own inspiration, in order that he may then transfer himself to the necessary cultural tasks."[12] Just how much this life is a possession of all men and not peculiarly of the Christian community becomes apparent from the way in which Schleiermacher deals with Jesus. Jesus is "the highest individuation of the highest type of human life,"[13] as the bringer of the Christian revelation, he is "the bearer, the stimulator, the mediator, the initiator of this highest life."[14] But it is a life which already "exists potentially in all men."[15] For Schleiermacher, "the divine is given in consciousness, given in history."[16] And as a direct consequence of this given, "the Schleiermacherian man does not need to

hear, and he has not heard. He stands under an effect, he finds himself in an inspiration beyond which there is nothing new to be heard. Therefore, even as a preacher he has nothing to say except what he has to say to himself on his own account (*aus sich selber sich zu sagen hat*)."[17] The Schleiermacherian sermon, which is only another way of saying, the Schleiermacherian interpretation of Christianity, thus presupposes a basis of mutuality between God and man which is not given by the one to the other, but rather is given with the existence of each, as it were, by definition. God and man are poles apart, to be sure, and this polarity is a real polarity. But with Schleiermacher, this way of conceiving the relations between God and man operates no differently than it has been observed to operate again and again throughout this essay. The polarity between God and man is the major note in their relations. Behind it, however, and lending it meaning, is a still more fundamental conviction about their identity. "Schleiermacher's dialectic," writes Barth, "is nevertheless a philosophy of identity, in so far as it culminates in a knowledge of this feeling, and of that which is *given* with it, namely, of the Other, which can be the ground (*Urgrund*) . . . of our own being."[18]

The essay entitled "Schleiermacher" shows with remarkable force how the principle of identity controlled the parentage of modern theology. It is an amazing contradiction of what Ritschl found in him from

whom he learned to write theology, and in those others upon whom he had relied so much. The second paragraph of this essay bears the superscription, "The Principle of the Middle."[19] Barth starts with a concept prominent both in the sermons which Schleiermacher preached during the closing years of his life (1830-1834) and in the *Christian Faith*, which underwent a revision during those same years, appearing in 1831. This concept is the concept of *peace*. It is clear from the development of this idea that Schleiermacher's dominant influence as the great theologian of the Prussian Union is not accidental. For this idea is not only an instrument of ecclesiastical politics but has "fundamental theological significance."[20] The sermons are full of eloquent representations of "an X, that is conceived as a union of that which is divided, as an agreement between two opposing forces, as a common element between two differences, as a point of indifference between two streams of influence that are flowing apart from or against one another."[21] The contrasts which moved the preacher to florid description are legion.[22] But the admonition concerning them is always the same. One must understand them in their relative and quantitative opposition as real contrasts. But one must also strive to recognize about them all, "in their midst, or over them the 'common feeling,' or . . . 'the one thing needful,' or . . . the 'community,' the 'unity,' the 'equation'" between them.[23] "That which is be-

yond all contradiction . . . is the deeper meaning of Schleiermacher's notion of *union*. This is what he means when he preaches *peace*."[24] This motif inspires his scientific thinking too. It governs ethics and dialectics as well as homiletics. Without a full appreciation of this tendency of every dialectical analysis to move toward the unity which lies, N.B., *between* the poles that constitute the opposition, neither the *Sermons*, nor the *Discourses*, nor the *Christian Faith* are understandable.[25]

Now the conception of *union* is rooted in the principle of the *middle*. The derivation is evident from the relation of Schleiermacher's dialectic to the conception of identity. Barth knows that Schleiermacher neither intended to be a philosopher of identity nor understood philosophy on this basis. "To identify Being and Knowledge *in* contradiction with Being and Knowledge *without* contradiction, to take this last step as the idealist philosophers, most radically Hegel, have done, this Schleiermacher hesitated to do."[26] For him, our knowledge and our being are and remain an image of that knowledge and being which stand above all contradiction. And yet, this is not the last word that must be said about this kind of dialectic. Ultimately, "as a dialectician, he lifts himself above that which he calls 'Knowledge of the world' (*Weltweisheit*)."[27] Schleiermacher knows something more absolute than any identification of knowledge and being with or with-

out contradiction; he knows a basis of certainty beyond the dichotomy of thinking and willing, "not to be separated from them but contained in them as their ground."[28] This absolute of the absolutes, this *Urgrund*, which is only above contradiction because it is within it as the *midpoint* between the poles of opposition, this unity which is *given* with our very existence and remains the same in that existence—this is the *unity of feeling*. "In so far as Schleiermacher has designated feeling as the area of the presence of God, he has obviously taken that big step . . . with the great philosophers of identity anyway."[29] For it is feeling, which becomes "the victorious middle" over every contradiction, since every contradiction is embraced by the fundamental opposition between knowledge and action which is unified in feeling. Exactly this unity makes feeling the domain in which the relationship with God takes place.

Thus, Barth makes, at the instance of Schleiermacher's thought, a detailed case for his indictment against the theology of the nineteenth century. It is *Aufklaerungstheologie*. This whole line of theological thinking knows what man has sensed before the dawn of reflection, namely, that the fundamental problem of existence is that of the *co-existence* of God and man. But this knowledge has grown dim, and it is the force and intention of Barth's theological thinking to *enlighten* it again. The dimness is the result of a mis-

taken view of the way in which God and man exist together. The theology of the nineteenth century with its eighteenth-century foundation promotes this error with incomparable boldness. The contrasts between God and man about which these centuries can speak so eloquently are always weakened by a polarity which is ever and again carried to its ultimate consequence, a divine-human identity. They are never contradictions which are rooted in the great *Contradiction.* And Barth seems finally to have the eighteenth century not against him, but with him, when he attempts to restore the outlines of the Christian doctrine of forgiveness on the principle of the radical opposition between God and man rather than on the principle of their polarity.

Such is the grip of the eighteenth-century habit of mind upon the contemporary one, that the outcry, immediately raised, and still quite widely sustained, was that all relations between God and man were now impossible. Earth seemed, therefore, doomed to the caprices of heaven, or, completely deprived of its solicitude. Apparently it occurred to few ranking theologians, at least in the English-speaking world—and to some of them it has not occurred yet—that the purification of Protestantism from an essentially alien theological procedure might be necessary whatever the immediate consequence to its faith. The proper historical appraisal of the theology of crisis cannot be achieved as

long as there is any misunderstanding of the true significance of the power by which Barth has halted the continuation of two centuries of the disintegration of the original insights of the Reformation. American theology is the last to discover that the secret is locked in Barth's adoption at the outset of a quite different theological method.

The primary task of the theologian, as Barth sees it, is not to make theology intelligible in the sense that it must conform to general laws of human knowledge and activity. The primary task of the theologian is not to give a faithful and accurate account of the "subjective functions of the individual" to which "the operations of God" must correspond. But the primary task of the theologian is to give a faithful and accurate account of the activity of God in Christ and its implication for divine-human relations. The question of "the right theory of knowledge," or "the self-activity of spirit," are of such secondary importance as to be negligible. They must be decided by the psychologist, and the moralist, and the theologian will necessarily make use of their decisions. Moreover, it is to be expected that the theologian in one generation will have a different ethical and epistemological outlook from the theologian in another generation. A theologian is competent or incompetent as a theologian, according as he is zealous for and jealous of the activity of God, irrespective of the human and subjective correlations. This

does not mean that theology is unscientific. It only means that what makes it scientific is its *specific theological* as against its *general psychological*—one could also say, moral, historical, and philosophical—relevance. Theology is a science in the sense that it is a specific discipline. It has its own account of the world of nature and of spirit. Like all sciences, it is human, all too human. But unlike all other sciences, it deals not with the world of nature and of spirit as such, but, as its name indicates, with that world as acted upon by God.

Theology is a science. But it is a *dialectical* science. It is not an accident, that although Barth for the most part speaks of theology as *Wissenschaft*, those who have entered into the meaning of this science, have tended to name it according to its most characteristic feature, calling it the "Dialectical Theology." This usage supports the intention of Barth's thinking with a subtle warning against those unhappy eighteenth- and nineteenth-century associations with which an unqualifiedly *scientific* theology is likely to be burdened. And it is sharply verified historically by the antithesis between Barth and Ritschl at this point. A conception of Christianity that is elaborated according to a *scientific* theological method is quite different from a conception of Christianity which is expressed in terms of a *dialectical* theological method. The magnitude of the difference is admirably illustrated by a passage at the

very beginning of Barth's dogmatics which is directly analogous to the statement previously cited at some length from the systematic theology of Ritschl. As formulations of the historical and theological contradiction at the heart of Protestant thinking today, the two passages are monumental. Barth writes:

> What we call Dogmatics is painstaking effort after the knowledge of the legitimate content of Christian discourse about God and man.
>
> There is such a thing as Christian dogmatics because there is such a thing as Christian speech. There was Christian speech before there was Christian dogmatics, and when there is no more Christian speech, then—no more Christian dogmatics. Dogmatics is an explicit concern about Christian speech, which existed before dogmatics and apart from it still occurs. This is not, as in homiletics, a concern about its rhetorical effectiveness, and not, as in apologetics, concern about its inherent power to convince the hearers by reason of its appropriateness to their ways of thinking and feeling; but simply and only a concern about the legitimacy of its contents—one might also say the suitableness of its contents, meaning the inward suitableness, suitableness in relation to that about which Christian speech speaks. . . . When we say, Christian speech, we naturally do not mean all and every sort of speech that a Christian might use, but that particular speech about that which makes Christians "Christian," about the specifically Christian relations between God and man (*von der christlich verstandenen Beziehung*

zwischen Gott und Mensch). Dogmatics rests upon the assumption that this speech is by no means infallibly released. . . . It rests upon the assumption that *criticism* and the query about a *norm* applicable to the phenomenon of Christian speech is not only permissible but is required by the very nature of this phenomenon. It therefore does not measure Christian speech by a rule that is foreign to its nature. But it confronts it with its own measuring rod, reminds it of its own immanent logic, it discovers what this speech evidently means, what it must mean if it understands itself aright. . . . For dogmatics like the Christian speech which it examines, is human not divine. Yet human task that it is, it proceeds upon the assumption that Christian speech can and must be taken seriously, taken at its word, that even in its human illegitimacy it also aims at a legitimate content, that reality (within the bounds of the humanly possible) is even on this level a necessary and attainable aim, and that it is worth while, when Christian discourse is being held, to take pains about the *knowledge* of the correctness of that which, as Christian speech, should be spoken.[30]

Dialectical thinking enables Barth to protect his conception of Christianity from the reverses which ultimately buried Ritschl's view of it beneath the theory of religion of the Enlightenment. Consequently, the doctrine of forgiveness in Barth's theology does not manifest the precarious fluctuations that marked the teaching of his predecessor in the same theological chair. Although Barth's teaching has its own peculiar

danger, it does not come from an ultimate adherence to the principle of polarity. There is no possibility that the act of God for man's forgiveness will ever approximate that line of imperceptible transposition beyond which it could become an act of self-forgiveness. The line of Barth's exposition of forgiveness is always drawn so that an arc described from any point along that line must swing from God to man, never contrariwise. But to understand the method by which this result is accomplished requires thorough clarity about the positive content of the term *dialectic*.

In his very instructive volume on *Our Concern with the Theology of Crisis*, Dr. Walter Lowrie interprets it: "Dialectic emerges in the tension between truth and truth—between two truths which are really or apparently opposite, or at least not obviously concordant. Dialectic, therefore, expresses itself in paradox of necessity, not as a whim."[31] Like logical thinking, dialectical thinking has its own inner coherence and its own necessary category. That category is not the syllogism but the paradox. As the major premise is to the minor premise in the syllogism, so the one truth is to the other truth in the paradox. To disturb this inner coherence in any way is to predispose the result to error, or, as Barth would rather say, to illusion. "Dialectical thinking," he writes, "is a thinking in affirmation and counter-affirmation, in question and answer, in such a way that the conversation never fundamentally breaks

off, that the answer is always also the question, which then finds its answer in the form of a more precisely placed renewal of the question, so that there is never fundamentally any final word which could be withdrawn from this movement from question to answer."[32]

Lowrie's timely comment that "there are many who cannot content themselves with that attitude, which is not a stable 'position' "[33] is fraught with more implications than he, in the nature of the case, explores. He has, however, quite rightly suggested that though the dialectic "denotes a method, it must be understood as method essential to the School of Crisis—which would cease to be what it is, if it should cease to be dialectical."[34] The point is, that not only *many* are discontented with such an unstable position but *all* men are; Barth indeed, included. Contrary to what some have supposed, he does not speak in this way for the joy of befuddling himself or others. His method is determined by his conception of Christianity. The dialectic involves not merely a way of thinking and of writing, but a way of living. It is because man's existence is dialectical that we have dialectical theology. And just as Barth would not speak this way of his own accord, so man would not of himself understand his existence in this way. This understanding is the disconcerting consequence of God's activity toward man in Jesus Christ. The existence of the forgiveness of sins in the world implies not harmony but discord. Barth

starts not with his own speech but with Christian speech, and it is a mark of the earnestness of this beginning that there be no stopping, no going on toward a synthesis but rather a movement "almost instantaneously from the one to the other in the 'dialectical moment.' "[35] Self-evidently, we want to be able to say *one word*. But we must always say "two words, we simply cannot do otherwise!"[36]

The course of theological thought since the Enlightenment shows that on man's level *one word* will always be spoken as though it were really possible to speak it. But " 'Jesus Christ, our Lord,' that is the gospel of salvation. . . . In this Name, two worlds meet and separate, two levels intersect, a known and an unknown. The known level is the world which has been created by God, but which has fallen from its oneness with God and is in need of salvation . . . the world of man, of time and things, our world. This known level is intersected by another unknown, from the world of the Father, the world of the original creation and the ultimate redemption. . . . The point of intersection at which this world is to be seen and will be seen is *Jesus* . . ."[37] Jesus Christ means that man is not alone in his situation but rather confronted by God. Jesus Christ means that God and man are together in one moment of existence and that the next moment and the one after that are like the first moment. Each succeeding moment may have its differences, but what

gives each moment its real significance is its likeness to all the rest. What each moment has in common with every other is that God and man confront each other. And because God is everything that man is not and man is everything that God is not, that moment is a moment of crisis.

The crisis of man's existence is that he is not at home with God, but instead "must hear about God and about himself, which presupposes somehow a distance between them. . . . Human existence becomes a question when man really hears about God and about his relation to Him in what is spoken. He not only *has* a question about his self-contradiction, he not only *thinks* it, but he *is* it. Of course, the dialectic which is implied in the conception of man *en route* (*homo viator*) has its logico-epistemological significance . . . but that dialectic is from the first the real dialectic of living . . ."[38] And it is the task of the theologian so to set forth this dialectical, existential, theological relationship; i.e., a way of looking at the relations between God and man not as spirit with spirit, but rather as the contradiction between Him who really *is* what He is, and him who "is what he is, in so far as he in everything also is not what he is."[39] The theology of "spirit with spirit" is the theology of polarity, for man has at least as much to bring to the relationship with God as God has. It is *spectator-theology*, for man and God stand on the level of their common spiritu-

ality, and each, as free and sufficient unto himself, looks across the polar opposition between them to discern what each may contribute to their life in peace and harmony together. Dialectical theology is *dialectical*, however, for only one reason. It knows that God and man exist together but not in mutuality so that one can proceed indiscriminately from one to the other in interpreting their common life. It knows that God and man exist together in the radical contradiction which neither can *look* at but in which both are. It is the contradiction between the holy, righteous, loving *One* and him who, by the word of forgiveness, knows that he is no longer *one*, whom God has forgiven, but *two* in one—holy and unholy, righteous and unrighteous, loving and unloving, what Luther specifically called, *peccator-iustus*—whom God condemns and forgives.

Thus, the really *critical* word in the relations between God and man is the word of *forgiveness*. It is the word which comes into man's existence from beyond it as God's free act of grace. It comes to him—and this last is really the first—in one who "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took on the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). It is the Cross which shatters every illusion of a bridge from man to God.

Man is never beyond the pale of forgiveness, never beyond the pale of sin which needs to be forgiven. Similarly, the bringer of that forgiveness can never be one who is so like other men that his priority is only logical, or historical. He must be so unlike them that every likeness is out of the question except as a resurrection from the dead. "In the crisis of the death of Christ," Barth says, "the totality of my existence in the flesh (*meines Daseins und Soseins*) . . becomes questionable in order that, when 'raised up,' it might be set in relation to the imperceptible new man with whom I, crucified with Christ, am identical. . . . It waits upon the resurrection."[40]

The significance of Christ's mediation of forgiveness is that it breaks open the crisis of human existence this side the line of death, as it were, and sets this crisis in relation to the final one of death and resurrection. Forgiveness is not only judgment and pardon, but at the same time, promise and fulfillment. Human existence which is broken by the fact of death is really a *both-and* existence because it is surrounded by the unmistakable parenthesis of an *either-or*. That is why there is no possibility of reversing the order of divine-human relations which returned the Ritschlian doctrine of forgiveness to the eighteenth-century principle of polarity. The secret of Barth's doctrine is that he sees these relations in the same two-sided way but as bracketed by the finality of an ultimate decision. Man exists as *both*

sinful *and* righteous because, in the last analysis, he is *either* forgiven *or* condemned, *either* dead *or* awakened from the dead.

This decision man can never make himself. God makes it. This decision man will never and can never declare unto himself. God announces it to him. Its consequences for human existence here and now are too awful to contemplate. They will never be faced unless they are heard again and again. But they are heard! Whether they are believed or not is another question. But they are heard! For the decision has been made. This is the word of grace alone through Christ! This word, which can only be spoken by God with such critical meaning for man's existence before and after death, is the last word and the first, in Barth's doctrine of forgiveness. His way of writing theology guarantees that this word can be spoken according to its own requirements. The relations between God and man expressed by the idea of forgiveness are meaningful only in the light of the radical priority of the divine activity. Man and God are not in *polar* but in *dialectical* relation, the one to the other. Therefore, every contrast that distinguishes them points toward the radical contradiction between them. When Barth develops his doctrine of forgiveness in such a way that God both affirms and heals this contradiction, he has accomplished what Ritschl could not accomplish over against the religion of the Enlightenment. Barth has

done more than restore the conception of forgiveness to central theological significance for Protestant Christianity. Theologically, as well as historically, he has avoided the great defection of the two preceding centuries of Protestantism. The dialectical elaboration of man's dependence upon God removes from the theological horizon every trace of God's dependence upon man and definitely repudiates the principle of polarity as a principle of Christian thought.

Chapter VII

New Horizons of Forgiveness

DIALECTICAL THINKING PROMISES THE RESTORATION OF THEOLOGICAL SELF-RESPECT TO PROTESTANTISM. THE criteria of theology are to be derived from the specific character and the inner logic of theological ideas. Although Karl Barth has published to date no explicit doctrine of forgiveness, it is nevertheless possible to indicate its structure. For the theology, lately taught at Bonn, and now continuing at Basle, is not a system in which some parts are introductory to others and thereby regulative of them, but it is a series of definitive statements about God and man in view of the existence of Jesus Christ in the world. Theology has again become dogmatic. The essence of dogma is definitiveness about that which makes dogma both necessary and legitimate, i.e., the mandate to which the theologian is committed. The fact that the dialectical theology is also dogmatic theology does not mean that dogma and dialectic are identical, but rather that dialectic is the instrument for the revival of dogma in the theology of contemporary Protestantism.

The application of the dialectical methodology to

the idea of forgiveness and its correlatives has led to the recovery of their original character. The relations between God and man in Christ become unmitigatingly paradoxical. The question whether and in how far the promise of the remission of sins through Christ is an unheard-of miracle is the central concern of theological discussion. Forgiveness is taken seriously as an event in the world subject to no conditions, but with specific conditions of its own. Barth undertakes to expound it in paradoxical terms because of his conception of Christianity as the gospel of the holy, righteous, loving God who in Jesus Christ has sealed a bond of fellowship with sinful, wicked, unloving man. Here God is everything that man is not; and man is everything that God is not; and the initial contact between them is provided by Jesus Christ.

Among Barth's already quite extensive and still expanding writings, there are four brief pieces which are devoted specifically to the question of forgiveness. Three of these are in the original German, and one, the pamphlet on "The Christian Life," is available in translation. Among the German writings, one is a joint essay with Barth's brother, Professor Heinrich Barth, published under the title: *Toward a Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, and to which the theologian has contributed a section called, "The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life." Two articles which have appeared in *Zwischen den Zeiten*, until recently the bi-monthly

organ of the dialectical theology, complete the list. One of these bears the title: "Justification and Sanctification"; the other discusses "The Keeping of the Commandments."

"The conceptions of Justification and Sanctification are the answer to the special question: what is the significance of the grace of God in Christ for the man to whom it comes?"[1] New horizons of forgiveness open to the eye that inquiringly follows Barth's answer to this question. Since the question almost naturally subdivides itself, the answer may do likewise. These are the considerations which call for some discussion: (1) How is *the grace of God* to be thought of as *coming* to man? (2) Who is *the man to whom* the grace of God *comes*? (3) How is the grace of God to be thought of as *coming* to man *in Christ*? It will facilitate both the exposition and the understanding of what Barth has to say about the idea of forgiveness and its correlatives if it is kept in mind that the conception of forgiveness proper together with the conception of faith is the special concern of question one; whereas the two subsequent questions refer to the ideas of guilt and of imputation respectively.

(1) How is the *grace of God* to be thought of as *coming* to man?

The most general reply to this question is: the grace of God is to be thought of as *coming* to man. We have to do with a conception that can only be under-

stood in dynamic terms. The grace of God is an event. It is the epitome of the great deeds done by God to man and for man. "Forgiveness and holiness are grace put into effect (*die Vollstreckung der Gnade*), i.e., in the most general sense: they are an *operation of God upon man.*"[2] Barth is anxious that there be no mistake about the dynamic character of grace because it is this view of it which he believes links him positively with the Reformers. When they singled out preaching as one of the two constitutive marks of the Christian Church, it was because they understood the grace of God as an event. "They believe it necessary to understand this grace not as cause and effect but as word and faith, and just on this account the representative event in the midst of the life of the church as preaching, as an act in which speech and hearing are concerned, indicating thereby that even that which is preached is not an essentially theoretical (*sachliche*) relation, but one which involves a personal encounter."[3]

Moreover, it is this dynamic view of grace that, in his opinion, distinguishes Barth both from Catholicism and from modern Protestantism. Their homiletics plainly indicates a different conception of grace. Not that Roman Catholicism does not stress God's gracious activity enough. The primacy of divine grace has always been insisted upon by Catholic dogmaticians. The denial of this is an error of excessive Protestant

enthusiasm, unable to see around the polemical issue of justification by faith versus justification by works. Barth holds that the defective point in the papal doctrine of grace lies elsewhere. The Roman Church "also calls the event in the center of the life of the church, grace. But she understands by grace not the coherence of Word and Faith, but the connection between a divine being as cause and a divinely created being as effect. With the proper reservation one may also say: she understands by grace not an historical, but a physical event."[4] It is not accidental that the Roman Church is primarily the church of the Sacrament, whereas the Protestant Church is the church primarily of the sermon. Neither is it fortuitous that contemporary Protestantism, particularly in its non-conformist branches, turns more readily to liturgics than to homiletics in the effort to demonstrate that it has not completely squandered its ecclesiastical self-respect. The luxurious security of the Vatican is always preferable to the precarious loneliness of the Wartburg when a reformation is required. But the Reformers knew as well as the Latin Fathers that the channels of grace are formed by the kind of water that flows through them. Forgiveness could be conceived as forensic, or as effective; but not as both at once.

The forensic character of divine grace in Barth's theology requires the irreversible priority of God in the act of forgiveness. This is what Barth means when

he talks about *pure act* (*actus purus*). "The existence of the church,"[5] he writes, "is *pure act*, divine action, which begins with itself, and is only intelligible in and of itself, i.e., not by any anthropological presupposition (*anthropologisch nicht vorverstaendliche Handlung*). The existence of the church is *pure act*, free action, not a continuation of a relation already existing (*nicht kontinuierlich—vorfindliche Beziehung*). Grace is an event of personal relation (*Zuwendung*),[6] not a transmitted real condition (*Zustand*)."[7] Grace is the expression of the absolute freedom of the divine will and the uncompromising nature of the divine sovereignty. Between the world of God and the world of man there is a gulf which only God can bridge.

In forgiveness, the grace of God comes to man as *pure act*. Barth is so explicit about this activity, and his protection of this purity is so extreme for modern habits of religious thought, that it will be useful to follow him a little farther, even at the risk of some repetition. The essay on "The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life" makes an instructive example of Augustine. Its thesis is, that there is a fundamental discontinuity between God and man and that this discontinuity is a fundamental order of creation. "The discontinuity," we are told, "between God as Lord and man, must mean, already in the light of the relation between creator and creature, that between ruling and being ruled over such an irreversibility exists . . . as to

mark the knowledge of God as the revelation of something that is really and radically *new*, which is not to be contrasted with any 'having already known' (*schongewussthaben*). If creation is to be understood strictly as desired and established by God, as a reality distinguished from His own reality, as the miracle of a reality, which, thanks to the power of His love, has place and permanence alongside of His own reality, then the continuity between Him and it, the true *analogy of being*, by reason of which the uncreated spirit can be revealed to the created spirit, cannot even belong to the creature as such, but only to the Creator in His conduct toward the creature."[8] Augustine, of course, was aware of this difference. He knew, indeed, "what later idealistic theologians never knew quite rightly any more, that the life of God, just because it is also called in the Bible, 'Spirit,' 'Holy Spirit,' is not identical with that which we know as our own created spirit, the life of our own soul."[9] But of one thing, Augustine did not seem to be aware, namely, that the uncreated spirit was not to be looked for along the line of direct continuity with the created spirit. "On this basis, the sharpness of the real conception of creation cannot be made clear. . . . The notion of man as created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) is not to be understood as a static and secure attribute of our own, but as an event of revelation (for us thoroughly momentary) which must always and in the strictest sense

first come to us. . . . Our having been created is a matter of grace; so also our having been created in the image of God. . . . Every other view means secretly or openly, in its premises or in its consequences, the re-interpretation of the Holy Spirit into the creative power of our own spirit."[10]

The great champion of Christianity against the Pelagians and the Semi-Pelagians ascribed every phase of the Christian life to the free and unmerited operation of the Holy Spirit. He taught salvation by faith alone as the indubitable gift of God. Even good works were possible and meaningful only because of the gracious gift of the Most High. Why, then, Barth asks, should "Augustinianism precisely in its doctrine of grace poison . . . the church?" And he makes his own characteristically rigorous reply. "Because it annuls 'Synergism' only to set it actually and finally in force. Because, in a much more refined and dangerous way than Pelagianism . . . it places the self-activity of man, the whole external and internal 'righteousness-by-works' morality and mysticism, and all human striving for holiness and for merit, under the sign of predestination and grace and of the greatest humility, and thereby, at the same time, sanctifies sin and nullifies the majesty of grace. . . . No praise of God's honor and no attraction of humility can alter the fact that where God's grace and man's work are regarded simply as the two sides of the same essential relation, that where,

instead of 'Holy Spirit,' one can as well say, 'human creative action,"[11] and vice versa, that there man is delivered up to and left alone with his sin."[12] These are strong words. But Barth is riding hard against a powerful tradition. For apprehending the height and breadth and depth of the grace of forgiveness, everything depends, in his judgment, upon the acceptance of the discontinuity between God and man as an order of creation. Grace is forensic because as the grace of God it is *pure act.*

At the same time, and here Barth turns a characteristically sharp corner, we have grace. Not on the basis of any worth of our own, but just in our worthlessness. Not because of our best efforts but in spite of them. The insistence that there is a great gulf fixed between God and man in no sense warrants the conclusion that man can have no relations with God. For "grace does not mean that God does 'everything,' but that he does something quite definite, not in general, not here and there, but for man. Grace means that God forgives man his sin."[13] The point is that there is continuity between God and man just because there is discontinuity between them. But there is continuity! We have grace as those not having it. But we have grace! For God "has said, 'yes,' to us, He has bound Himself to us. He has received us. . . . That we are His . . . no, that 'I belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, not to myself but to my faithful Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ,' this is the grace which effectively comes to us, the grace of forgiveness and holiness."[14] Forgiveness means that, as those who deserve and can expect only the opposite, we have found favor with God. Like every act of grace, it is *pure act.*

How can this dynamic, sheer miracle of forgiveness be thought of as really coming to man? The answer is that the grace of forgiveness comes to man as the *crisis* of his existence. If we really understand the critical character of human existence, we shall be prepared to apprehend the possibilities and impossibilities of the continuity and the discontinuity between creature and Creator. Barth takes more seriously than some theologians the common conviction of the Christian Church, that man can never under any circumstances forgive himself. "There is no infra-worldly victory over sin,"[15] he writes in the commentary on First Corinthians. Moreover, the Christian Church has always affirmed that forgiveness is actual, and Barth is trying to be serious about this too. The only way he can do justice to both aspects of the Christian gospel is to start from the position that forgiveness is actual, just because it is so very foreign to the world of "time, of things, and of men," to use an oft-repeated phrase of his. Man is so great a negation over against God, that the actuality of divine grace manifests itself in nothing short of an attack upon man by God. "We have grace. Who dare say that of himself? Every one must say it

of himself, who has heard what has been spoken to him. . . . And what do we hear other than this, that grace is attributed to us, the grace of Jesus Christ in which God has again and again loved us and in which out of sheer lovingkindness he has drawn us to Himself, the grace of the Word that in the last analysis we can only allow ourselves to be told, in which God is there for us, even as He is there for Himself?" "It was a bad, bad moment in the history of Protestantism, worse than everything else that continued to spring from this tragedy, when one began to understand the possession of grace as an experience of the heart or the consciousness of pious men."[16] Elsewhere Barth defines this attack quite specifically as the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the great affirmation of God against the great negation of man! The resurrection of Jesus really is the starting point for Barth's theological thinking (and not Kierkegaard, as Lowrie would have us believe). What God did in Christ by calling him from the dead, He does here and now for us when He forgives us our sins. "The grace of forgiveness is our life. . . . In forgiveness, God says to the dead: 'Live!' "[17]

Now this divine attack upon human existence establishes the crisis within which God's activity is truly apprehended and man's existence becomes meaningful. The conception of *existentiality* in Barth's thought expresses, on the one hand, the *momentary* character of

the relations between God and man, and on the other hand, their character as a *totality*. It is never so that we *have* a relationship with God in the ordinary sense of the word. This way of speaking is an accommodation to an inexact habit of thought. It is always so that we *are* in a relation with God—or we are not.[18] Moreover, it is never a part of us that is open to the Divine Word. We either hear God's word and obey it as man, or we do not. There is no compartmentalization of human existence in theology. The conception of forgiveness never excludes the possibility of not being forgiven, but what it does exclude is that we are forgiven in part. God created us in toto, and so He deals with us. Indeed, for Barth, the momentary and the total character of God's dealings with men coincide. God neither forgives us a little bit yesterday and a little bit more today, and still more tomorrow, nor does He forgive us for some things we have done while remaining displeased with others. God either forgives us here and now altogether, or He does not forgive us at all. That we are forgiven *now*—this is the possession of that grace which is sufficient for us. That we shall need forgiveness within the next quarter of an hour, within the next moment, is a foregone conclusion which rests upon other grounds. It is not avoided by the notion that we really live by a little bit of forgiveness spread over a long period of time. Such a view can be taken only by one who *has* a relationship with God, but

never by one who *is* in that relationship. The person who *has* a relationship with God (let us say, also an experience) is a spectator who implies by this idea that he has set himself at a point outside that relation, from which he can take stock of it and pass a judgment upon it. But God will not be looked at. He will be listened to and obeyed. Of course, our yesterdays and our tomorrows will play their part. We can't avoid speaking of God's dealings with us in this way. How can we, seeing that we belong to the world of time? Of course, our feelings, our resolutions, our enthusiasms, are a part of these dealings. Being creatures of the world of things, how shall we avoid our station somewhere amid "the great pandemonium of human piety."[19] As men, we belong to God, and as men, God speaks to us. He confronts us as those who are in relationship with Him *now*, and again, and yet again; or, as those who are not in this relationship.

Man exists altogether by the grace of God. When man is forgiven, he is forgiven *in toto* and *from moment to moment*. The consequence of the discontinuity between God and man is that God forgives man as the sheer miracle of His love and that when he forgives, man's whole existence is changed. Changed?—yes, but not as the simple moving from one house to another. Forgiveness, coming to man as the crisis of his existence, is a thoroughly paradoxical event. It is the paradox of the man who is both sinful and righteous.

It is the paradox of a futuristic indicative, of a forgiveness that is present as a hope, as a promise, and which in spite of its being a promise is at the same time an event for the man to whom it comes. We have grace. Yes, but in no sense as a possession of our own. We have it as that which God Himself has in us, as those who *are* in grace. This is the great indicative which is affirmed in forgiveness. We are God's now because we have been His from the beginning. Yet for all its present, its indicative character, the grace of forgiveness can only be a promise and a hope. Why? Because man is *not* yet what he *is*.

(2) Who is the *man to whom* the grace of God comes?

The paradoxical idea of forgiveness has its equally paradoxical counterparts. The man to whom the grace of God comes is the man who is *not yet* what he *is*. This tension is the content of the conception of guilt, as Barth interprets it.

As we have seen in the case of Ritschl's discussion, the idea of guilt deals with the nature of the responsibility for sin. Unlike the nineteenth-century theologian, however, Barth disregards the subjective character of this responsibility as irrelevantly secondary and focuses his attention upon its objective necessity. The meaning of this difference is more clearly discernible from the German words for guilt and its adjective which are, respectively, *Schuld* and *schuldig*. Luther's

explanation of the first article of the creed in his *Larger Catechism*, contains the noteworthy assertion that we are obligated (*schuldig*) to love, praise, thank, and serve God as the Giver and Preserver of everything that we are and have.[20] In other words, it is axiomatic for Reformation thinking that man from the creation is responsible before God. Responsible for what? Obligated in what sense? The German is again more lucid than the English. The relationship of Creator to creature, according to the Reformation teaching about the word of God, is that of *hoeren* and *gehoeren* (hearing and belonging). That man belongs to God (*zu Gott gehoert*) is guaranteed by his hearing of God's word (*indem er Gottes Wort hoert*). This act of hearing (*hoeren*), moreover, which determines man's existence, is an act of a particular kind. It is an act of obedience (*Gehorsam*).[21] Thus, we have in the original dispensation between God and man to which Luther points us with the term obligation (*Schuld*), the following relation: *gehoeren—hoeren—Gehorsam*, respectively, belonging, hearing, obedience. *Schuld* means all three at once. One is not engaged here in a rationalistic or psychological account of the status of man before God, so that man, as it were, first belongs to God, then hears His Word, and then obeys it. The existential character of forgiveness requires the correspondingly existential character of guilt. This means that to the

divine word of promise man has only one response: *responsibility*.[22]

Now guilt affirms the triumph of responsible over irresponsible human existence. The man, whose existence becomes critical when confronted by God, knows what he ought to be and do in the face of what he has not been and has not done. The real crisis of human existence is that man will never acknowledge the distinction between obedience and disobedience unless he is confronted by a declaration which he cannot escape. The meaninglessness which afflicts his life from birth to death is always laid at the door of the gods, or the fates, and illusorily mitigated by superstition. Man prefers to accept everything from fetichism to the idea of progress rather than face his own unfulfilled responsibility before the one true God. Barth presents the man to whom the grace of forgiveness comes in grim, but graphic terms. "Forgiveness and holiness," he writes, "are the operation of God upon man. It is a matter of his conversion, his decision for God. But it is *his* decision. . . . If, according to Luke 15:32, the event of grace is a matter of nothing more or less than a resurrection from the dead, then surely for a resurrection at least a *corpse* is necessary, and to be sure, in respect of the event of grace, of the work of the Word and the Spirit, that of man."[23] The fact is, that the man who is forgiven is so much of a

corpse that he doesn't even know it until he has been raised from the dead, until he has been forgiven.

There is perhaps no better proof of this, than the illusion to which man gives himself with respect to what he shall do and what he shall not do, when he shall do it and when he shall not. This is metaphysics, not theology. For when man thinks of himself in these terms, he is still secretly or openly asking those questions which are pressing for the spectator but which betray the fact that one is only looking on. To all these questions one answer is to be given: *we do the bad!* "The spectator asks: Whether then, I shouldn't somehow already know this? Whether grace is really necessary? The spectator asks: Whether then, along with my knowledge of myself as sinner, I do not also know something else about myself, whether I do not know at least about a partial righteousness before God, about a tiny, friendly, beginning of not-sinning, about health, about good works if not of outward act, at any rate of the heart and the intention, about a beginning, which very probably then could increase by the time of my death to a quite respectable little capital sum? . . . The spectator asks: But you do believe and you do obey? Shouldn't this action be good? Should you really also in this recognize yourself as sinner? . . . The spectator asks: But what has this to do with grace? This is the typical situation of the unreconciled man."[24] What has this to do with grace, that we are thrust

into the midst of the typical situation of the unreconciled man? The answer is: "The meaning of our situation is that God does not leave us and that we cannot leave God. It is because God *Himself* and God *alone* lends our life its possibilities that it becomes so impossible to live. . . . It is because the answer to all our questions is *God* and *God's* conduct toward us, that the only answers that we can find in terms of our own conduct either change immediately into questions or are otherwise too vast for us. . . . It is when man is most remote from God that God in His mercy seeks out and finds him. In order to let him realize his own relation to Him in its positive significance, that is, as love, forgiveness, mercy, grace, God waits only—if God can be said to wait—for the submissiveness which gives to Him the glory due unto His name, for the penitence in which man makes an unconditional surrender, for the . . . *confident despair* in which man joyfully gives up for lost—joyfully because he knows what it means to be lost in this way." "It is through the inescapable severity of this doom that we come upon the reality of God."[25]

To this position, expressed when his theology was just beginning to be noticed, Barth still adheres. He maintains it, if anything, more strongly now than he did then. The trend of his rapidly changing thought has moved until now, and is moving, steadily in one direction: *the exclusion of every independent anthro-*

pological sentence from theology.[26] Man knows himself in so far as he lives in reality, in the truth and not in illusion, whether as a sinner or as a sinner who is forgiven, in no other way than by a mediation of the grace of God. "He only recognizes the truth . . . whose thought and speech are deprived of the marks of all spectatorship and deliberation, because he stands in the midst of the event about which he is speaking."[27]

Those who have cried out against this analysis, that it cuts the nerve of ethical vigor, ought to have been more careful about revealing the paucity of their own ethical insight. For they appear to be involved in the very condemnation which the foregoing explains. One of the most distressing phenomena of the moral life is the hypocrisy of good men. And generally speaking, morally sensitive people are as baffled by the stubbornness of this hypocrisy as they are impotent against it. But if they were religiously as sensitive, they would understand that faith is the substance of things hoped for, not the substance of things well done. Consequently, virtue has no power over hypocrisy, but the scepter belongs to forgiveness. Forgiveness means that good men are as guilty as bad men, and bad men are as accessible to God as good men; and if good men object to so divine a dispensation, it only convicts them of aspiring to monopolize the grace of God which is the essence of hypocrisy.

The integral connection of forgiveness with the prob-

lem of ethics is the substance of the article on "The Keeping of the Commandments." Its thesis is that the only legitimate ethic is a theological ethic. A theological ethic guarantees that the question: what shall I do? will be asked and answered in the light of the question: what does God do? "The thesis," writes Barth, "which shall be presented and explained in this address is this: That to the so-called ethical problem, to the old and the always new question: what then should we do?—so far as it is not simply to be answered with the deed itself, but for the purpose of reflection upon the deed, with thinking and speaking about it—no other answer is to be given, than just this one—*keep the commandments.* . . . With this thesis a very definite methodical position is assumed with respect to the ethical problem."[28] The theological method, however, cannot mean a special standpoint, independently of which the philosopher could take up his methodical position. There is no general problem of ethics to which a general answer can be given. And the real philosopher must ultimately admit this theological determination whether he wants to or not. For, "the ethical truth distinguishes itself, let us say, from a mathematical or a speculative-metaphysical truth that can perhaps be devised, in that it is never evident, but again and again becomes evident in the concrete situation of the individual, in the situation in which I, in which you, in which we all actually find ourselves now, in which

we actually found ourselves just before, and in which immediately we shall find ourselves again. The reality of our situation is, whether we see through it or not, a choice, a decision, not a decision that somehow first lies ahead of us, that we ought first to make, but a decision that we really make right now. To you and to me a commandment is given and is known. You and I obey it or we do not. You and I are questioned. You and I answer, this way or that, in either case with the act of our existence. You and I are just now that for which we decide in our relation to the commandment that is given and known to us, in our keeping or failure to keep this commandment."[29]

The question, "what ought we do?" can be asked in two ways, and every time it is asked, indeed, every time we ask it ourselves, both of these ways are to be reckoned with. It is possible to ask the question without really taking it seriously. Perhaps, the questioner asks after all only with reference to what he wishes to do, or with reference to what he can do. Or, perhaps, he asks, expecting some command that shall preserve his status quo and ease his conscience by providing an opportunity to shift responsibility for his action. In a society that has been depersonalized by industrialization, this kind of an inquiry is not infrequent. Moreover, perhaps one inquires from a commendable interest in ethical problems. One is so interested that one wants to do something about righting wrongs. If

one only knew what to do, it would be done. One may ask concerning the *ought* and the act from the purest of motives and with the loftiest of aims. And yet, to him who asks, "what else shall we say than that the question concerning what we should do, . . . has an urgency which we, even though it be ever so honestly upon our lips and in our hearts, have sometimes not yet heard."[30] At the same time, the question can be asked with utter candor with respect both to the *ought* and the act. When this happens the existential character of the ethical problem is recognized. The *ought* is then a claim upon me which does not first have to establish itself in relation to my wishes or my capacity to obey. It is a claim upon me which I recognize. I know what I *ought*. The act is then not the expression of my freedom to do this or that. It is simply the decision in the face of the claims which I recognize. I know what I ought to do. Whether I decide for or against what I know I ought to do, is another matter. With this question *another* confronts me. But I do not therewith confront another. To ask the question in utter candor, "What should one do?" is to find oneself not the questioner, but rather the one who is being questioned. Yes, more, it is to find oneself the one from whom an answer is expected, an answer which is one's own existence with the awful responsibility which this involves. For one is commanded not to *give* an answer but *to be* an answer. "If I really ask . . urgently

about that which I ought *to do*, then I confess thereby in any case, that I yield the prerogative of my freedom to do this or that, to postpone my decision, moreover, that I am not only ready, but already am in the act of *deciding*, seeing that I *know* what I ought. . . . If I have seriously asked, then I *am asked*, irrespective of whether I satisfy the claim or do not satisfy it, then *my existence*, no matter how it may be constituted, is stamped as the answer to this question."[31]

Why do I ask, if I already know? And if I already know, why do I not also know whether I have met the claim upon me, whether I actually have obeyed, or have not? Barth's replies to these questions reflect his conviction (in contrast to Ritschl) that the problem of ethics in Christianity is a matter of the Law, not of the Gospel; and that its proper place in a theology of forgiveness is under the conception of guilt. For guilt is the tension between man's disobedience and his responsibility in the face of the divine command. Why do I ask? The answer is: because I am a man. And this means, "perhaps, that I have the grace to awake from the deep sleep of the forgetfulness of that which I already know, to want to remind myself of it again, in order to make clear to myself in and with my earnest question, the only possible serious answer. But *perhaps* it means also the other, that I am frivolous enough to ask seriously when I should answer seriously with the act of my existence, frivolous because

my question is a game, because I already know what I am so earnestly asking about."[32] Why do I ask? "Obviously because we are men, and neither God nor idols nor half-gods, because we live in temptation, surrounded by the incomprehensible, imperative, actual possibility of offense."[33] This is why we ask, even though we already know: because we are men! Why, however, do we know in spite of the fact that we ask? The answer is: because we are men confronted by God. The meaning of the *ought* and the *act*, which we cannot avoid by pleading ignorance or incapacity, is that God will not leave us alone. God's Law increases man's sin because it is God Himself in His revelation with respect to Whom man must decide. God's Law increases man's guilt because it is God's affirmation in the act of His forgiveness that no excuses can be accepted.

He who is not a spectator, but stands "in the midst of the event about which he is speaking," knows with what terrible resoluteness God's Law tears open the crisis of human existence. For God's Law is one. The moral law, the idea of the good, the categorical imperative, even the Decalogue, and the New Testament summary of it, are not the distinguishing marks of the real decision. They are "indefinite quantities, the definiteness of which we ourselves would have to determine from time to time . . . The determination of that which is good, of what we ought to do, would then

be our matter."[34] But the will of God is never our matter. It is not to be determined but to be obeyed. "To the rich young ruler, Jesus said not only: you know what you ought but you know the commandments!"[35] And "we must . . . have understood the command badly, if we should not be aware of it that it becomes in the moment of our decision our Judge, that we stand before it as those who disobey it."[36] The great tragedy of ethical generalities is that it is so easy to regard our decision as a decision of obedience. Perhaps we do achieve what these generalities require with more or less perfection. Perhaps, we have kept the commandments from our youth. But decision means: *Either-Or!* Otherwise it might be difficult, but it would at least be possible to hitch one's wagon to a star and follow it, to abide faithfully in an old habit or exchange it for a new and better one. But decision means: *Either-Or!* And the test of its radical decisiveness, the test of our having heard God's command aright, is the judgment that we disobey. "I cannot prove," Barth says, "that our decision, so far as the eye can reach, means a struggle against the command. We are touching here the question of truth, which is not to be answered in general but only in particular. I can only ask whether there is anyone around who has the courage to affirm the contrary about his action? . . . Again, there is in this matter no proof, but only the appeal of the particular, highly particular knowledge

of the context of our situation which we all have, only the question whether there is anyone about, who should hold the opinion that he obeyed God, really *obeyed*, really God, just once?"[37] If there be such an one, let him examine himself particularly with respect to the matter of Love. Love is the fulfillment of the Law. God desires love from us, love for Him and for our fellows. "Love . . means not wanting to be without the one whom one loves, to be with him in everything, with the same incontrovertible self-evidence with which one cannot be without himself."[38] But is there anyone who could or would declare about himself that he loves like that? "If we look at our own and others' decisions from the outside, it might be possible for us to judge more mildly. If we stand *in* the decision, if we look at our own face in the mirror, and do not run away in order to forget what we have seen, but tell ourselves that *that, that* is the answer to that about which we are asked by the commandment, then we shall very probably have no breath at all for other judgments about this answer. We do not do the Good. We do—*tertium non datur*—the Bad."[39]

This is the situation of the man to whom the grace of God in forgiveness comes. He is under the grace of God, for every contact between God and man is derived from God's pure act of grace. But the situation between God and man is actually such that man is

under God's grace in the form of God's Law, not of God's promise. For God's Law is God's command and God's judgment in one. In the situation in which he is, as man, total man, and from moment to moment, man does the bad. He is God's enemy. It is the awful disclosure of God's grace that man sees himself as one who is enthusiastically spending himself with his senses, his desires, his morality and his religion—in the futile attempt to escape God's reach. There is a significant difference between the religious thinking of the Reformers and the religious thinking of our own day. They knew that man cannot escape God's reach, but were disturbed by the thought that the man who is confronted by God is God's enemy. We, on the other hand, are too perplexed by the question as to whether there is any God at all to be aware of the fact that all the while we are against God. What Barth is trying to do is to return us to the *niveau* of Reformation thinking by showing us that our *God-problem* is the cloak for our existential disquiet at our unrecognized estrangement. We do not know what we say when we say *God*, because we do not know that we can only say *idol*. This is only a vocalization of what we *are*. We are God's enemies because we are disobeyers of God's Law. "Our enmity against God, however—cordial friendship for every self-made conception of God, or for this or that religio-ethical view of the world, is not excluded by it—the bad that we do, is precisely our

enmity against . . that 'He alone.' . . . Sin is really taken seriously only when the Law, against which sin perishes and measured by which . . . sin is 'lawlessness,' is understood as the revelation of the living God Himself, i.e., simply grace."[40] Under God's Law and under God's judgment, under God's wrath and under God's punishment—this is the situation of the man to whom the grace of God in forgiveness comes. For the awareness that we are really God's enemies is the experience of divine wrath which is genuine only in so far as it is recognized that it is we who provoke this wrath, not God who desires it. The Law, however, is not itself God's last word but only established by God's last word. This word has to do with that victory over sin and guilt which is wrought ultimately by its own power. God's last word is not Law but Gospel, the gracious promise of forgiveness which generates man's faith.

In forgiveness, we have said, the grace of God comes to man as the pure act of crisis. But that is not all. It also comes to man as faith. Faith is the work of God alone, God's Holy Spirit. It is not a subjective function of man but an objective (existential) determination of man by God. Faith is not experience, belief, conviction, or whatever one chooses to add to the list of human subjective possibilities. These all belong to that existential disobedience, that existential crisis which breaks out for man when the grace of God's

forgiveness comes to him. Faith, real faith, the faith which receives this forgiveness, is an intransitive, like the guilt which makes forgiveness necessary. Man does not believe or disbelieve. He *is* a believer or a disbeliever, just as he *is* guilty or not guilty, *is* under grace or *is not* under it. "Precisely when we take into account the subjective side of the central conception of revelation, we have spoken of the work of God the *Spirit*, of the miracle of love in the *outpouring of the Holy Spirit*. . . . For, this does not come into consideration, that we somehow open, prepare, and set ourselves, for participation in this event. That this our participation in the event of revelation is *included* in this event itself as an event of *divine* action, this is the fundamental significance of the Holy Spirit for the Christian life."[41]

With the conception of the Holy Spirit, the last consequence of the fundamental discontinuity between God and man, which is necessary to the right understanding of forgiveness, is drawn. Nineteenth-century theology, and not infrequently theology today, has been willing to give up everything to the primacy of God and has undertaken to expound most thoroughly Christocentric principles, so long as this one capacity—God-given to be sure, as an order of man's constitution from the creation—the capacity to believe, was held inviolable. But in Barth's eyes, this is the most characteristic betrayal of the Reformation by contem-

porary Protestantism. When the Reformers expounded the Gospel as Word and Faith, "they risked," he writes, "the paradox (the necessary paradox) that for the understanding of the mediation of this righteousness exactly the person of the man to whom, of course, it is mediated, be left out of consideration. . . . The summary of their recognition of the sole constitution of the Christian life through the Holy Spirit was their sentence that man will be *justified for the sake of Christ by faith alone*."[42]

Now Barth has no quarrel with the contemporary concern that the experience of God should and must be a real experience. But he claims that it is both necessary and possible to interpret that experience in such a way that it is in the fullest sense a *human* experience, and yet in no sense governed by the principle of human self-determination. There is a theological doctrine of experience. It says, in effect, that the nature and validity of the experience of God is derived from the nature of faith; not that the nature and validity of faith are derived from the experiential capacities and possibilities of the believer. The experience of the Word of God is included in the speaking of the Word of God. If the Word of God has really been spoken to me, I know that I have heard it. The cluttering up of the auditory processes by erudite epistemological and psychological presuppositions—as though something relevant were going on—is, like the disobedience which

good men hypocritically ignore, the evidence of disbelief. "Faith," Barth says, "is the possibility for knowing the Word of God which takes place in the real knowledge of it. . . . If one asks what is the . . . reality of the knowledge of God in so far as the possibility of this knowledge is included within this reality itself, then one can answer exactly and fully only by saying: this reality is faith."[43]

Here we come upon Barth's dogmatic substitute for the conception of the *analogy of being* on account of which he cannot tolerate the religious principle of the Enlightenment in Christian theology. In spite of the stress upon the radical discontinuity between God and man, and the categorical rejection of synergism, there is a "God-likeness of man" (*eine Gottfoermigkeit des Menschen*). There is, in Emil Brunner's now famous phrase, "a point of contact" (*Anknuepfungspunkt*) which makes possible the hearing of the Divine Word, just as it makes possible the speaking of it. But again, of this "point of contact," one can think and speak "only theologically, and not theologically and philosophically." This, "only theologically," means the interpretation of man's ability to receive the Word of God, from the conception of the Word, respectively, the primary and complete agency of God Himself, on the *analogy of faith* (*analogia fidei*). "We do not oppose the Catholic doctrine of the *analogy of being* with a denial of the concept of analogy. We say, how-

ever, the analogy in question is not an *analogy of being* but, according to Romans 12:6, an *analogy of faith*: the correspondence of the known in the knowing, of the object in the thinking, of the Word of God in the conceived and spoken word of man. . . . This *analogy of faith* is very probably the sense of the remarkable Pauline passages, in which the human knowledge of God becomes transformed into man's being known by God."[44] Such an analogy is a true analogy because it is a *gift*, given with the Word itself, not a *capacity*. Capacity means the elimination of analogy by ontology. There is no static identity of being behind the disparity between Creator and creature, as in Catholic and natural theology, but only the dynamic act of decision in which God and man really confront each other. God's decision to vouchsafe His grace creates in man the decision of acceptance which is faith.

By faith, man perceives the true order of his being. He sees that apart from God's comprehensive determination of every self-determination, he is not that which he was created. The unbeliever is not an animal, for that is a great injustice to the beasts which are faithful to that for which they were created. He may be an extraordinarily adjusted or maladjusted psycho-physical organism. But he is not human. For only in faith can man be what he was created, that is, determined from the beginning to be. "In faith, the chief point is this that man must understand himself, exactly in this his

self-determination which is in no sense diminished, . . . as *another*, to become whom he had no capacity, to be or not to be whom, he is, therefore, not free—in short, who he *can* only be in so far as he *is* this *other*. Man *acts* when he believes, but that he *believes* when he acts, this is *God's* act."[45]

When faith is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit; when, to put it in christological terms, both Docetism and Adoptianism are avoided, then one has achieved a conception of forgiveness which is sufficiently rigorous to maintain both the radical priority of divine grace and the radical nature of human guilt. For when faith is attributed to the existential status of man under the Word of grace, then both salvation and condemnation, the awareness of sin and of forgiveness, are the consequence of the activity of God. The fundamental discontinuity between God and man is bridged by a continuity which God Himself has established. Upon this continuity man can enter because he has become, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a new creature. This is the meaning of that rigorous correlation between grace *alone* and *faith alone* which is the heart of the Reformation teaching about forgiveness, and of Barth's teaching.

(3) How is the grace of God to be thought of as *coming* to man *in Christ*?

The new horizons of forgiveness dawn in the theology of crisis, if they dawn at all, because Karl Barth

has tried to take very seriously the fact of the existence of Jesus Christ in the world. The tenacity with which this fact clings to the world, while at the same time resisting every attempt to make it a natural and necessary part of the world, makes the conception of imputation a fruitful instrument for correlating the work of Christ with the idea of forgiveness. For imputation, the transfer to one what is another's, as if it were his own, defines the central significance of the life and work of Jesus Christ. "The Christian life that truly and actually earns its name . . . we do not live . . . but one wholly other lives it, God lives it in Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit for us and in us."[46] The fact that God deals with us as if we were "in Christ, i.e., as solidaric with Him," "this is the miracle of grace as *forgiveness*."[47]

In Ritschl's doctrine of forgiveness, the last word was also the first. This is true of Barth's doctrine too, but with a significant alteration. The Ritschlian Christology discloses a contradiction which makes the treatment of the idea of forgiveness and its correlatives impossible, whereas the Barthian Christology is based upon a contradiction which makes the treatment of the idea of forgiveness and its correlatives possible. It is, of course, the difference between a systematic contradiction and a dogmatic one. What is logically absurd, can be paradoxically necessary. Thus, the dialectical theology begins where the ethical theology

very casually ends. "The Word of God as the word of reconciliation is Jesus Christ Himself, the crucified and risen one . . ."[48] So far as the understanding of forgiveness is concerned, the general and particular aspects of the life of Jesus are quite secondary. What is important is the Cross and Resurrection. It can be put down as a canon of Barthian thinking that although Good Friday and Easter would obviously never have happened without Christmas, Christmas could never have had the slightest significance without Good Friday and Easter. And it may be put down as characteristic of modern thinking, on the contrary, that it knows so well what to do with all of these days, that nothing really significant is done with any of them. None of them is essential enough to convert the melodramatic pageantry of their seasonal revival into the dramatic conflict between existence and non-existence once for all. For Barth, at any rate, "in Christ, the crisis breaks out."[49] Literally and radically, it *breaks out* because His living and His dying are as unpredictable as His dying and His living. The Cross and the Resurrection translate the human existential decision between obedience and disobedience into the decisive existential fact of life or death. If any man believes that he could have and would have anticipated the death of Jesus—and all simple attempts to explain it are predicated on this anticipation—he is guilty of an historical distortion. Not infrequently, it is accom-

panied by the personal distortion that he could or would have died likewise. Both misunderstandings are as pagan as the acceptance of the plausibility of the resurrection because of the animistic presupposition of the immortality of the soul or the naturalistic presupposition of the cyclical revival of life. The fact is that man has to be told about that kind of an end and that kind of a beginning. Just as the destruction of the hypocrisy of obedience follows upon the judgment of disobedience, this telling word, when it is spoken, accomplishes the destruction of every human calculation and possibility.

The strategic significance of the Cross in forgiveness is that in marking the end of the life of Jesus, it denotes God's negation of man's life. "His death is the occasion for man to understand himself in God: namely, his increase in his decline, his strength in his weakness, his living in his dying."[50] The Cross means that God does meet man and that there is an end of something. This something is that which made the Cross necessary, namely, the life of man in the world of time and things. One who had no part in this life, really took it upon himself, bore its responsibilities, the judgment and the curse that were over it, and brought it to the only possible conclusion. The inevitability of such an end is rooted in the fact that the life of the world of time and of things is not of God. What separates this life from God is not its finitude but its disobedience.

It remained, therefore, for him alone who was not of this life but of God to accomplish its negation. "The one and only source for the real, the immediate revelation of God is *death*. *Christ* has unlocked its gates. He has brought *life* to light out of *death*. *Out* of *death*! . . . *This* is the situation between God and His own! . . . The work of Christ is, according to the consistent Synoptic, Pauline, and Johannine witness, the obedience to the will of the Father which leads Him straight toward death . . . There . . . where only *one* possibility remains, and this lies *beyond* all thought and all things, the possibility: *Behold I make all things new! Everything which the New Testament has to say affirmatively about God, man, and world, is related exclusively to this possibility which in the strictest sense defies consideration, and therefore, is always related simultaneously to the great critical negation which inexorably precedes this possibility which belongs to a new order.*"[51]

Indeed, even of the Cross of Christ, even of death, it is possible to make a human possibility. This is what the fatalists, the cynics, the ascetics, what every religion does, except the religion according to which "the bodily *risen* Christ always stands over against the bodily *crucified* Christ and nowhere else."[52] So long as death is still the last human possibility and not the absolute end of all human possibility, it is not death but a living on in that ultimate sin which refuses burial

with Christ. "The dead! This is what we are. The resurrected! This is what we are not. But this is just what the resurrection of the dead is about, that *that which we are not* becomes identical with *that which we are*. . . . Therefore, the reminder of death is so important, so urgent, so disquieting, so actual, because there is really the gospel of the resurrection behind it, because it is the reminder of *life*, of our life, that we do not live but that is, nevertheless, our life."[53]

Just as the Cross is significant because it is that event which is followed by the Resurrection, so the mark of my radical end on Calvary is my recognition that I (the subject of the world of time, of men, of things, of sin and guilt and disobedience) really ended there and began a new life, became another I (the subject of the world of eternity, of God, of forgiveness, and of faith). "Life in the world of time, of things, and of men is as such life in the imperceptible separation from God in apostasy and in the only too perceptible nearness of God in anthropomorphism. . . . And now, Christ died. The meaning, the last word, the death in this death is God: God as the . . . new (impossible) possibility of man. . . . In so far as Christ actually in his death as the man who lives in God *stands in my place*, in so far as I actually 'believing,' participate in His death, in order to live with Him, one fundamentally other than I am has entered my horizon 'once for all.' . . . And because the death of Christ is the end

of life, life that can and must continue to die, the triumph of fundamental sinlessness over the possibility of sin, the kerygma: thy sins are forgiven thee! because Christ dies no more, because the succession death and resurrection is not reversible—*therefore*, neither can the succession sin and grace be reversed, *therefore*, I am, living in Christ for God, as one who is dead unto sin."[54]

Thus, my forgiveness for the sake of Christ becomes God's great *plus* which suspends the great *minus* of human existence even while affirming it. This forgiveness is an event in which my unrighteousness is not accounted unto me. Instead, there is reckoned unto me the righteousness of another. I actually am that which I actually am not. In Christ, I am a new creature because I am forgiven. And this forgiveness in which God looks at me *in Christ* and by reason of which I look at God *in Christ*, this is that grace which is the power of the resurrection. I am *in Him*! This means that I am *not yet* what I am. For the grace of the resurrection is an event of an *eternal future*. It is eternal because it comes to me here and now, this side the line of death and continues to come to me. It is future because I am not yet across that line. "In so far as God promises us our redemption, He is present to us."[55] The dynamic actuality of this promise of God to men is the pure act of grace which is the miracle of their

forgiveness. And the meaning of this forgiveness for the man to whom it comes is always the same:

"We believe, therefore,—in ourselves as being the imperceptible subject of the resurrection that is to come (*futurum resurrectionis*)."[56]

"Grace is the power of the resurrection. The indicative here becomes the imperative entirely of its own accord. . . . The forgiveness of sins is valid—so *let* it be! 'With Christ you are dead unto sin, so now *be* dead unto it! You are raised up in Christ unto the life for God, so *live* it now! You are established in freedom, so now be *free*!' . . . We (as those who are what we are not, as the subject of the resurrection that is to come) cannot raise the question concerning that which God—no longer knows."[57]

Chapter VIII

The Crisis of Protestantism

THE CURRENT IMPOTENCE OF PROTESTANT PREACHING AND IRRELEVANCE OF PROTESTANT PIETY ARE THE results of the gradual surrender of dynamic Protestantism to an alien appraisal of the meaning of human existence. The urgent necessity of understanding God and man and the world in terms of the Christian gospel of forgiveness has been yielded to an altogether different way of thinking and of living. It is possible to trace this foreign spirit to its source and to discern its nature and extent. As Protestantism is the nemesis of Catholicism, so the religion of the Enlightenment is the nemesis of Protestantism. Any mitigation of the radical character of these antitheses ignores the travail of their birth. So long as God is God, He will not be mocked; and if He be no longer God, then all preaching is vain, and all piety too.

The present crisis of Protestantism is the dilemma imposed upon it by the inner logic of its history. A vicious circle of defection from and direction toward its own creative genius threatens to nullify the Protestant attempt to clothe human existence with mean-

ing. The insights nourished by the original commitment to the promise of the forgiving love of God in Jesus Christ are caught between the betrayal of that faith to a spirit which can only dissolve it and the perpetuation of that faith in a spirit which can only revive the spirit of dissolution. The sterile supernaturalism of Protestant scholasticism against which the Enlightenment properly protested seems to lie in the wake of any thoroughgoing attempt to repudiate the principle of polarity by the rigorously paradoxical exposition of the idea of forgiveness. The theological principles of Albrecht Ritschl and Karl Barth are the exemplary evidences of this Protestant crisis. The idea of forgiveness cannot be revitalized by Ritschl's way of writing theology, because his methodology is governed by the religious principle of the Enlightenment on the basis of which forgiveness had become a wholly negligible consideration in the interpretation of the relations between God and man and the world. Barth's way of writing theology is methodologically so determined that he can break with the religion of the eighteenth century and establish the basis for a truly meaningful theology of forgiveness. But this does not mean that Barth has maintained a theology of forgiveness adequate to the foundation he has laid, nor that Ritschl's theological labors, despite their inadequate foundation, have no significant contribution to make toward a vital theology of forgiveness. As a mat-

ter of fact, there is one particularly fruitful element of Ritschl's thought, and one particularly dangerous element in the thought of Karl Barth which must be noted before this attempt to explore the idea of forgiveness in Protestantism can be brought to a conclusion. Guided by Ritschl's insight and Barth's oversight, the theology of the present can, perhaps, most promisingly discharge its responsibility to the past and to the future.

It will be recalled that when Ritschl undertook to write theology he was governed by the necessity of making the operations of God upon man *intelligible*. But he was not governed solely by that consideration. There was another, and specifically a *theological* element included in these operations which he set forth as indispensable to the correct interpretation of them. "The religious conceptions of forgiveness and reconciliation," he wrote, ". . . must not be applied in isolation to the individual subject but to the subject as a member of the community of believers. Nor do they express a change of standing relatively to God, without at the same time implying a change of attitude to the world on the part of those who aforetime were sinners. . . . It is objected to the principle we have just considered that religion is a relation between man and God, while to refer it to the world is a part of its application. This is an untenable distinction. The reference of religion to the world cannot be regarded

as an accident which may be present or absent without altering its substance, for in Christianity, e.g., we must conceive of God as the Creator and Ruler of the world, and ourselves as parts of the same. Whoever overlooks this fact makes an imperfect commencement in the subject he wishes to understand, and so falls into error."[1] Forgiveness is emptied of all meaning unless it applies to the individual wherever he may be in the midst of the complex of relations that make up his world here and now. "If forgiveness is the basal conception of Evangelical Christianity, it is impossible that it can express the relation of men to God and Christ without at the same time including a peculiar *attitude of the believer to the world* founded upon that relation."[2] The ultimate validity of Ritschl's theological method is derived by him from the fact that it enables him to show how the revelation of God in Christ supplies the law of the co-existence of spirit and nature in the world. "The peculiar character of the religion founded by Christ," he says, "depends, therefore, of necessity upon the fact that He whom God knows, and who has perfect knowledge of God, asserts supremacy over the world."[3]

There are two closely related consequences of this insight of Ritschl's which make it the most valuable contribution of his thought on forgiveness. The one is, that the emphasis upon the world as immediately and always involved in divine-human relations serves as a

proper safeguard of the implications of the Christian doctrine of *Creation* against the tendency to detract from these implications in the interest of the Christian doctrine of *Redemption*. This tendency is particularly acute in Protestantism since its protest against the rationalistic natural theology of scholasticism involved it from the beginning in a dynamic interpretation of the theological problem. Under this dynamis, the idea of forgiveness and its correlatives leads to such a complete reversal of the relations between man and God that it is extremely difficult to prevent the tension between the situation of the created man and the situation of the redeemed man from culminating in their mutual exclusiveness. Either forgiveness lifts man completely out of his sinful condition into the condition of a new creature before God, which is redemption, or the condition of man in the world of sin, the distorted world of the creation, is held to be less defective than it is. The affirmation of the reality of forgiveness as a promise of that redemption which implies not a new creation but a new creature is a complex and precarious theological task.

The other consequence of Ritschl's insight tries to meet this difficulty. The marked stress upon the historical character of Christ's mediation reinforces the emphasis upon the conception of creation as a necessary element in the correct view of forgiveness. The historic event of the incarnation guarantees that the

world must be the scene of the act of forgiveness. The teleological character of this event appears to solve the problem of the relation of forgiveness both to the ongoing of sin in the world and to the final consummation of Christ's mediation in a redeemed humanity. The lordship which Jesus exercised over the world in the faithful pursuit of his ethical vocation demonstrates that forgiveness is historically possible and actually describes the forgiven life.

> For what Christ is in virtue of His eternal destiny, and what the influence is which He exerts on us because of His exaltation to God, would be wholly beyond our ken if we did not also experience the effects of the same in His historical existence in time. Unless the conception of His lordship receives its content from the definite characteristics of His historical activity, then it is either a meaningless formula or the occasion for all kinds of extravagance. If, on the other hand, we are to hold fast our faith that Christ is at this moment Lord over the community of the Kingdom of God, and is working towards the gradual subjection of the world to this its true end, then lordship over the world must be recognizable as already a conspicuous feature of Christ's historical life.[4]

As the world achieves its true end, only gradually, "as a means to God's essential purpose in creating the world of spirits,"[5] so the actuality of forgiveness requires its mundane manifestation as a precondition of the fulfillment of God's ultimate purpose for man-

kind and the world. Indeed, the actuality of forgiveness depends less upon its specific relation to the stubborn fact of sin in the world than upon its teleological character as a manifestation of the divine purpose for man and the world.

The vigorous critique which the dialectical theology has leveled against the theology of the nineteenth century has brought forward terms like *psychologism* and *historicism* to describe what the leaders of the contemporary movement regard as the principal defects of the theological tradition immediately behind them. They are "opposed," writes Professor Pauck, "to any sort of theology which holds God to be given in inner or historical experience, . . . to modern theology in so far as it is dominated by Psychologism and Historicism."[6] The grounds for this opposition are numerous, as the foregoing analysis has tried to indicate. But the theological critique which rests upon them has been so thoroughgoing that there is grave danger of overlooking the positive contribution of those who have labored in the vineyard of Christian thought since Schleiermacher. It cannot be forgotten that they were engaged in saving theology from an eclipse that threatened it as severely as the decay which the dialectical theologians now charge them with having fostered. The interpretation of the Christian religion was in grave danger of being emptied of all positive personal content by the reduction of its tenets

to the general laws and the all-inclusive sweep of the human reason. What came to a climax with the philosophy of Hegel, was "the license of . . speculative endeavor, and the identification of these endeavors with Christianity."[7] And it was an attempt of inestimable importance that Schleiermacher and Ritschl and the theologians between them undertook to break this identification. For, "the theologians and philosophers of the Enlightenment were losing the particular and historical character of the positive religions by making them a part of general rationalism. In contrast to them, Schleiermacher established the principles of modern theology, which seemingly enabled it to do justice to the unique essence of religious belief and particularly of the Christian faith."[8]

It is, however, not only the historical meaning of this psychologism and historicism which has been obscured by the critique against them. There is a theological meaning too. It does not change what has been said about Ritschl's thought. But it does qualify what has been said by a consideration that the dialectical theologians are inclined to pass over. Let the negative effects of Ritschl's psychological method in theology, and its exemplification in "that which we historically learn that the fellowship with God gave to Christ",[9] stand. This "criticism of liberal theology . . . can hardly be refuted."[10] But the positive theological worth of this method and its exemplification

must stand also. Ritschl's attempt to do justice to the historical and psychological relations of the Christian revelation to this world is properly estimated only when they are viewed in connection with the implications of the Christian doctrine of Creation. Ritschl's great stress upon these relations involves the genuine effort to appraise "the world of man, of time, and of things" (Barth) in which the act of God's forgiveness must concretely occur, if it is not to occur in complete vacuity. Surely this has always been the specific concern of the conception of Creation. Creation means not only that the reality of man and the world is a fundamentally derived reality but also that wherever else God and man may have relations with each other, they must and do have them in the world, our world. Surely, Creation means nothing if it does not mean that man is a creature of history and psychology and that precisely as he *is*, he is dependent upon and has fellowship with God or he does not have to do with God at all.

Precisely at this point, the latest tendencies in Barthian thinking involve a serious limitation which vitally affects the force of the otherwise legitimate critique which they seek to safeguard. We have already had occasion to notice in some detail the steady direction of Barth's thought away from what he calls "every independent anthropological sentence in theology."[11] But the precarious implications of this course

have only very recently presented themselves. They appear most strikingly, perhaps, in those writings which are not books but monographs and are like living commentaries on what many have read with some foreboding on the pages of the fuller and more dogmatic works. The situation in which Barth now finds himself seems like a kind of parable from which may be gleaned the first glimpses of a perspective upon his theology as a whole.

Theologically speaking, the battle now going on in National Socialist Germany for the life or death of Protestant Christianity is an acute witness to the fact that anthropology and theology are critically integrated. Actually, the affairs of God and the affairs of man are intimately intertwined. And when, as in the present instance, the things of God are threatened by the things of man, eminent importance must be ascribed to a theological anthropology. It is, of course, by this time common knowledge that the theologians have not neglected to speak on this decidedly anthropological issue. Moreover, the most persistent voice among them has been that of Karl Barth. He so clearly sensed the crisis that he interrupted the writing of books for the writing of tracts for the times. This is in itself symbolic enough of the inner theological crisis which Barth is facing. But the title under which he has published them is a still profounder symbol of this crisis. He who sent forth such epoch-making influences as one who

faced theological problems *Between the Times*, suddenly becomes contemporary. Now he is writing and thinking and struggling about *Theological Existence Today*.[12]

What, then, is the meaning of that crisis of which this startling change of front is so likely a parable? The briefest answer that may be given is, that the necessity of speaking theologically to an acute anthropological situation has disclosed the inadequacy of Barth's dialectical attempt to exclude all independent anthropological considerations from theology. The constraint to defend theological existence *today* has revealed that his way of writing theology *between the times* is in grave danger of becoming a theology *above the times*. In a word, Barth's most recent theological contributions tend to lay bare the fact that his theology is becoming less and less *dialectical*. There are two publications in Barth's latest series of tracts which point to this disclosure.[13]

Number One, or *Theologische Existenz Heute*, deals very largely with the ecclesiastical and political circumstances which arose for the German Protestant Church in the face of the totalitarian claims of the National Socialist State. These circumstances cannot engage us beyond the remark that they provide a definite historical situation in the midst of which the church cannot maintain a theological neutrality. Both its silence and its speaking constitute a decision which,

unless the church is no longer the church, has theological significance. Barth, however, has spoken, and the nature and implications of this address for his dialectical method are very important. It is significant that he begins with a clear distinction between the "word that is circumstantial" (*Wort zur Lage*) and the "word that is essential" (*Wort zur Sache*)[14] which he endeavors to maintain throughout. He describes his own situation as analogous to "the chanting of the hours by the Benedictine monks," which "even in the third Reich doubtlessly proceeded in an orderly way without interruption and diversion."[15] He has participated in several theological statements "upon which one has bestowed the highest praise in so far as one has imputed to them a lack of actuality, respectively, existentiality, i.e., concrete relevance to the problems of the day."[16] For whatever he has to say, "can really only consist as to its content in the question: whether it would not be better for the church and for us all, if just now we did not speak 'to the circumstances' but now more than ever . . . 'to the essential matter.'"[17] This essential word concerns the matter of our theological existence, i.e., "our existence in the church as the ordained preachers and teachers of the church."[18] As preachers and teachers of the church, our task and our concern are as specific as our theological existence which "can be lost to us today."[19] The church is not "to do everything so that the German people

should 'find once more the way to the church,' but so that they may find in the church the command and the promise of the pure Word of God. . . . The church has not to serve men anyway and thus not even the German people. . . . She serves the Word of God alone. It is God's will and work if men and thus also the German people are served through His Word. The church believes in the divine establishment of the State. . . . She does not, however, believe in a definite . . . form of the State. . . . She preaches the gospel *also* in the third Reich but not *under* it and according to *its* spirit."[20]

Barth goes on, then, to an examination of the implications of this essential work. Negatively, he shows what it does not mean by uncovering the weakness of that group within the church which seemed to stand nearest to his point of view and above the political turmoil. Positively, he returns to the monastic position he himself has assumed at the start, in what seems like a categorical word of isolation.

On the surface, at least, the so-called "movement of Young Reformers"[21] appears to be a movement of mediation between the two ecclesiastical extremes, namely, the politically inspired "Faith Movement of German Christians"[22] and the theologically inspired isolationism of Karl Barth. The Young Reformers are concerned about the problem of theological existence but they also see that this existence is intimately inter-

twined with political questions like that of the *Reichsbischof* and general ecclesiastical reform in accordance with the new political order. "The Young Reformers were among the most enthusiastic with respect to the creation of the episcopacy and they were the most impatient with regard to the naming of a bishop. They saw in this situation 'a symbol of new ecclesiastical unity' and they called the advocacy of this symbolical act their 'at-once program'!"[23] But to all this, Barth takes a severe exception. He sees that the question of the episcopacy involves the very essence of the Protestant Church quite independently of the question of its political appropriateness. He does not categorically deny the legitimacy of such an institution in Protestantism.[24] But he detects in the zeal of the Young Reformers to go as far as possible with the German Christians, and then in their equally zealous refusal to go farther, the real bond of kinship between them. "The Young Reformers are after all at variance with the German Christians only on the formal matter of the independence or lack of independence of the church but not on the matter of the *essence* of the church."[25] If this were not the case, the Young Reformers would have had to proceed altogether differently. Of course, "something had to be done and has to be done. . . . I understand this line of thought but I regard it as wrong. It is not serious enough. . . ."[26] What is necessary is not a *movement*. "The

Holy Spirit needs no movements."[27] But what is necessary is a "*spiritual* center of opposition that would really give meaning to an ecclesiastico-political one."[28] The real issue in this crisis as in all crises of history is whether "God is in Jesus Christ alone."[29] This is the meaning of the Word of God which—rather than any political situation—makes the church what it is. "For people live, even in the totalitarian state, by the Word of God, the content of which is: 'the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.' "[30] The only way by which the church can be true to the circumstances (*Lage*) is to pursue with unabridged faithfulness, like the Benedictine monks, her essence (*Sache*), i.e., the Word of God in the midst of, but not in subservience to, any circumstances.

The acumen with which Barth himself pursues this constitutive principle of the church through the contemporary ecclesiastico-political confusion in Germany is astonishing. The vigor and penetration of his "circumstantial word" are persuasive. And yet, one lays the monograph aside with some misgiving. This misgiving does not relate to Barth's stress upon the fact that the church serves the Word of God and not man. One agrees with the affirmation that the service of the church is in the midst of a specific historical situation but never of that situation. And it may be allowed too, that the "at-once program" of the Young Reformers is theologically thoughtless.

But one is at a loss to know what can be the meaning of Barth's categorical isolation of the life and thought of the church as the mark of faithfulness to the Word of God. Must we not also say of this line of thought what its author said of the other: "I understand it, but I regard it as wrong"? For Barth seems to have committed himself wholeheartedly to the monastic ideal without the monastic presuppositions. Actually, the Hours were chanted in the monastery near Bonn in utter indifference to the imperial eclipse of republicanism in Germany. They were the same hours and the same chants. But Karl Barth at the moment of Hitler's accession to power was not in that monastery but "here in Bonn with my students in lectures and seminars."[31] And he himself gives us the clue to his own mistake. He thinks of himself as pursuing theology and only theology, "as heretofore, and as though nothing had happened."[32] However, the parable which Barth's own writings narrate tells us that this is not the case. It is no accident that he is no longer writing for *Zwischen den Zeiten* but rather for *Theologische Existenz Heute*. But he has failed to appreciate fully all that is involved in this alteration. Somehow he is no longer the Barth of the second *Dogmatik* but a new and strangely lonely figure in the church's life and thought. And the real pathos lies not in this solitariness but in this strangeness.

It will be recalled that in the second and revised

Dogmatik, Barth clearly perceived that he could no longer say the same thing in the same way. The situation of the second Prolegomena was a different situation from that of the first Prolegomena. He had, therefore, to say the same thing, but to say it differently. This undertaking points us to the real difficulty in which Barth is now. The situation has changed again, and quite rapidly. The interval between 1932 and 1933-1934, has proved itself to be a precariously short interval. But Barth is trying to say the same thing in the same way and not in a different way.

When one examines his monotonous circumlocution about what is undeniably the essential point of the church's life, one discovers that Barth's radical stress upon the Word of God has involved him in a great embarrassment. The very unmonastic world in which he has been living in Bonn has actually brought him to speak differently about the Word of God. But instead of recognizing the integral relation of this difference to the doctrine of the Word itself, Barth is elaborating his doctrine in complete disregard of this relation. Actually an anthropological situation is changing his theological position while the theological adjustment he is making tends to deny the anthropological elements that are related to it. The result is that he has departed from that intersection of perpendiculars which has hitherto characterized his exposition of the word of forgiveness and is embarking

upon a tangent exposition of it. It is a tangent because at the end of monograph Number One, the author is virtually in a theological vacuum. It is as though he were repeating: "The Word of God! The Word of God! The Word of God!" in tragic indifference to the fact that this repetition is actually going from man to men, from human situation to human situation. Barth seems to be abandoning his thoroughly *dialectical* way of writing theology for the purest kind of *supernaturalism*. For he no longer seems to be saying: "God *and* man!" but only: "God!" And this is the very seed which fertilized the soil out of which the theory of religion of the Enlightenment and its principle of polarity sprouted and grew.

But this regrettable development in Barth's position is not wholly unrelated to his previous standpoint. This is the outstanding significance of the reply to Brunner in Number Fourteen of the series. All along the line, Barth is saying to Brunner, "No!" The issue is the same as that which monograph Number One has brought into the foreground. But the later tract has gone beneath the surface of the politico-theological controversy to the foundation on which that controversy rests. What is the task of theology? Brunner answers: "The task of our theological generation is to find the way back to a correct *natural theology*."[33] Admitting that there are passages in his earlier works which might have given ground for cooperation in

such a task,[34] Barth rejects every such "influence of the positive liberal pre-war theology"[35] in an answer of his own that is diametrically opposite. "We have to learn again to understand revelation as grace and grace as *revelation* and thereby to turn aside with determination from all 'secret' or 'incorrect' *natural theology* . . ."[36] This is a new and more decisive formulation of the same quarrel that underlies the substitution of the conception of the *analogy of faith* for the conception of the *analogy of being* in the doctrine of forgiveness. And here are the roots of Barth's recent undialectical tendencies.

What is it, then, that Barth opposes in Brunner's formulation of the task of theology? The answer is: its basic presupposition. According to Brunner, "there is in man apart from revelation, something which, so to speak, comes to life with revelation, something like a 'potentiality for revelation,' or a 'potentiality for the Word,' or a 'receptivity to the Word,' or a 'capacity for being spoken to.' "[37] "Even the church must take into account the fact that one *can* really speak with man about God."[38] Brunner thinks of this something as belonging to man by reason of his having been made in the image of God.[39] On this account, "the world is 'somehow recognizable' to man as God's creation and 'men somehow know the will of God.' "[40] Above all, it means that there is in man from the creation and by reason of it a " 'point of

contact' (*Anknuepfungspunkt*) for the grace of redemption."[41] This is what Barth takes to be the meaning of *natural theology*, and to this he says, "No!" He does not say, "No," out of a lack of understanding of Brunner's real concern. Brunner "wants to be a pastor—among the intellectuals, to instruct modern youth, to carry on conversation with the unbelievers. He would like to be in the most complete sense a Christian teacher, preacher, moralist, and finally, of course, also a dogmatician."[42] Barth recognizes what all of us recognize at once in this concern—its inevitability and its necessity. The Christian Church and the Christian theologian must face these responsibilities and do them, if they are to be faithful. Brunner is concerned about "the two-sided question which continually confronts us all in this activity as a whole or in part: *What* should happen, and *how* should it happen? about the question as to the content and the question as to the language, about the question of revelation and the question: What I and my hearers and readers should, let me say, 'do with this revelation'?"[43]

It is Barth's answer to this question which is decisive for the point now under consideration. He agrees with Brunner that there is a legitimate difference between the *what* and the *how*, the content and the language of the theological problem, between revelation and the expression of revelation. In an earlier

article, Brunner had referred to the latter in each case as constituting "the other task of theology."[44] When then Barth rejects this reference as an impossible "abstraction in theology,"[45] his own way of relating the *what* to the *how* appears. There can be no talk of *one* theological task and an *other* theological task. For the *how* is related to the *what* like the periphery to the center of one and the same circle. Any explicit solicitude about the former is tantamount to defection from a proper concern with the latter. Where the content, where revelation, are really understood for what they are, there the language, the "knowing what to do with" this revelation is self-evidently governed by that revelation. Barth's words are so pointed and fundamental that they deserve citation at some length:

> If in theology and in human life as such, one is really concerned about God, His Word, His deeds, and His sovereignty, then, the question of language and form . . . cannot be raised and answered otherwise than as a suspended and ever and again to be suspended peripheral question. . . . Why should it not be included within the one theme of theology? . . . Why should the simple persistence in the *one* task which is set for theology suddenly be called "Individualism," "Nominalism," "Intellectualism," "One-sidedness"? Why is Brunner afraid of . . . "the complete isolation" of the Church . . . ? . . . Something entirely and wholly different would have to be said in view of the undeniable fact that theologico-ecclesiastical

practice is human practice in a human situation! Here one would have to speak about the unconditional command which has befallen this situation and obtains in it, about the day of Jesus Christ . . . about the indigenous and victorious power of the essence of this command. . . . Do we ever have this primary task sufficiently behind us so that we could pass over from it to a second . . . ? . . . The *how*—that is . . . after all man in whose situation there is such a thing as theology and the Church. The man, however, is that which should be reconciled with God, justified and sanctified, comforted and governed, and finally, redeemed by God. Is that really not sufficient? Or is not every "More" in this situation actually a "Less"?[46]

As though he were aware of the deepest meaning of this answer, Barth, in the same general context, parallels this situation to that of the Annunciation (Luke 1:34-35). He sees in Mary's question, "How shall this be?" just the typical peripheral question which every such question must be over against the *what* of a declaration like that of the angel. The tragic fact for him is that the theologian always lets himself be beguiled into the byways instead of holding fast to "the miraculous continuation of this and so many other similar biblical stories."[47] Miraculous? But what kind of a miracle is it which happens between the center and the periphery of Barth's theological circle? Granted, there is a center and there is a periphery, and the periphery is derived entirely from the center!

But there is a periphery! Is Barth's answer really sufficient when the *how* that "should be overcome," and only "finally redeemed" is in imminent danger of losing its actuality as a *how*? Granted, that the victorious power of the Word and the Spirit is an indigenous power. It cannot, however, be as "entirely and wholly different" from that situation over which it is victorious, except in terms of the purest and most capricious kind of spiritism. There is no objection to be leveled against Barth's refusal to start with even the minutest human potentiality in the relations between God and man. But there can be every objection to the effort which he makes to prevent such a beginning by the virtual annihilation of the human situation before the divine act. When Barth insists upon moving from the *what* to the *how* with only a "miraculous continuance" of the latter as the guarantee that there is a *continuum* in such a movement, he has abandoned the true dialectical perspective in which his theology was first conceived. Even a little acquaintance with the history of theology ought to warn against the dangers of such ill-concealed supernaturalism. If the theology of the eighteenth century seemed to rob God of any actual significance in His relations with man, the pursuit of Barth's thought to its latest conclusion seems to point us to a situation in which man seems to be robbed of any actual significance in his relations with God.

The real point of debate between Barth and Brunner concerns the precise relation between the *creative* and the *redemptive* operations of God upon man. The man who is to be redeemed by God is the man who is fallen from the goodness of the creation into the corruption of "the world of men, of time, and of things," which Christ came to redeem. By far the clearest statement which Barth has given us on this matter is to be found in the essay *Toward the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. This position he has strengthened by the revision of his dogmatics. But over against the standpoint of Brunner, the meaning of Barth's conception of *creation* becomes clear. Whatever the merits or demerits of Brunner's natural theology may be, it cannot be deprived of this one point of validity. It does represent an attempt to take the doctrine of creation seriously. To be sure, man has sinned. But man's sin cannot have completely destroyed the basic fact of his creation, that which makes him a *man*, namely, the *imago dei*. And Barth does not wish to be taken as denying this fact either. Two passages, however, will be sufficient, in the light of the immediately foregoing, to allow us some estimate of this desire. "The continuity," he writes in the essay on the Holy Spirit, "between God and me in my creatureliness is . . . not given, but consists in God's giving. Therefore, I who live as God's creature, do not know what is good, namely, what is divinely good, therefore, this

must be told to me through the second miracle of love, through God's revelation."[48] And the question which he asks of Brunner, carries its own answer in similar vein. "Does the function of God's revelation in Christ consist only in leading us within the enveloping reality of divine revelation from that first to that second level? Furthermore, with what right does Brunner affirm that a real knowledge of the true God in all of its imperfection . . . is not after all redemptive?"[49] Whatever may be true of Brunner, are we not entitled, at least to return the question? What kind of a continuity is it which is never *given* but always *being given*? And if this continuity is always *being given*, what can be the meaning of a "second miracle of God's love," or a "second level," when the miracle of the first can never be regarded as having occurred, as *given*? With what right does Barth affirm the word of redemption, respectively, forgiveness, when he seems already so definitely to have loosened Creation from its moorings in the first miracle of the Word of the Creator? How, if there is no *Creation* that is really *given*, can there be anything to forgive, not to speak of redeem?

Clearly, what has happened to Barth is the opposite of what has happened to Ritschl. He has allowed the implications of his doctrine of redemption to imperil the reality of the doctrine of creation, whereas Ritschl has allowed the implications of the

doctrine of creation to imperil the reality of the doctrine of redemption. In both cases, the dangers break out where God and man and the world are most essentially interrelated, where, therefore, Protestantism is essentially at stake, namely, in the doctrine of forgiveness. And in both cases, the reason is as plain as the fact. It lies in their way of writing theology. Ritschl's psycho-epistemological method never envisaged a truly *dialectical* appraisal of the relations between God and man in forgiveness. Barth began with a *dialectical* representation of these relations which he seems to have been unable to maintain. What teleology made impossible for the former, pneumatology seems to have made impossible for the latter. The immediate conclusion, therefore, must be that they have both failed to establish the proper tension between the Christian conceptions of creation and redemption, which is essential to the proper conception of forgiveness for want of a truly *dialectical* theological method. Consequently, their respective doctrines of forgiveness tend to rest fundamentally upon the one or the other at the expense of each. Forgiveness in Ritschl's theology is undialectical because the all-inclusive purpose in which God and man and the world are integrated is thinkable only in terms of the common level of identity on which all the polarities between them find their ultimate harmony. Forgiveness in the theology of Karl Barth is undia-

lectical because the gulf between God, on the one hand, and man and the world, on the other, is so wide and fixed that forgiveness is ultimately thinkable only in terms of the supernaturalistic spiritism which destroys the existence and activity of man and the world as a consequence of the existence and activity of God.

The present course of theological thought thus seems to be confronted by a critical dilemma that has ominous consequences for the theology of the future. If it goes in the direction of Ritschl's attempt to liberate theology from the religious impasse of the Enlightenment, it is confronted by the historical and theological prospect of an ultimate return to the principle of polarity which brought that impasse about. If it goes in the direction of the theological reconstruction attempted by Barth, it is confronted by the historical and theological prospect of so complete an emancipation from the principle of polarity as to find itself in the grip of the orthodoxy which the Enlightenment desirably destroyed. There seems to be no alternative to the Scylla of polarity and the Charybdis of supernaturalism except to repeat the long and arduous historical and theological achievements and failures that can only perpetuate the impotence of Protestant preaching and Protestant piety.

And yet, perhaps there does loom up out of the darkness of this definitely Protestant crisis a light at which the theology of the present may kindle the

torch which it must pass on to the church of the future. Perhaps, the immediate task of contemporary theology is, after all, quite clearly charted. Contemporary theology must correct iself by abandoning its bondage to the ethico-psychological and historical principles which it has inherited from the Enlightenment through the theology of Ritschl without adopting with unqualified eagerness the alternative which the theology of Karl Barth has supplied. And it must indicate that it has done this by uniting the proper historical concern of Ritschl with the proper supra-historical concern of Barth in a proper tension between the conceptions of creation and redemption presupposed by the dynamic Protestant idea of forgiveness. This will mean, then, that the real contribution of the theologies of Albrecht Ritschl and Karl Barth consists in the way they have prepared for a reaffirmation of the Christian doctrine of forgiveness, by which Protestantism stands or falls, and for the perpetuation of this doctrine in terms that are adequately *dialectical*.[50]

Appendix

A. On The Pantheistic Character of Philosophy

The history of thought is replete with attempts to define the contrasts of reality. The One and the Many; Being and Becoming; Actuality and Potentiality; the Whole and the Part; the Infinite and the Finite; these are but a few of the numerous points on the graph which man has employed to chart his relations with the eternal. Of all the draughtsmen whose skill has fashioned it, two alone have drawn with entire accuracy. Both used the same instrument which had so eloquently served their predecessors: "the fundamental assumption of rationality," viz. ("that the universe is rational in the sense of being assimilable by the human mind").[1] The one became intoxicated with the perfection of the sketch. The other found only disillusionment, for the instrument broke in his hands. When the infinite God is identified with Nature also infinite, and man is conceived as "of all the infinite modes . . . of God . . . the most interesting and important,"[2] then, we stand with Spinoza. When, on the other hand, God and man and nature, at the very most "probably bear some remote analogy"[3] to one another, then our position is with Hume. In either case, the history of human reflection on the relations between God and man—*das Problem des Existierens ueberhaupt*—has reached its inevitable destination. The Pantheism of

Spinoza and the Skepticism of Hume are the natural commentary upon the kind of "identity of the Good and the Real" which "is indeed the very copestone of Platonism."[4] The titanic character of the human reason has thrust philosophy into the dilemma, on the one hand, of borrowing its crowning conception from the court of religion, and on the other, of tinging every philosophic use of that conception with pantheism. For behind the polarity of Subject-Object (Idealism), and the polarity of Object-Subject (Realism), there lurks the persistent desire to disclose the underlying unity of both. What lies beneath the opposition between Subject and Object, however, can only be this—they are fundamentally identical. The principle of Identity is the cornerstone of Pantheism. It is against this stone that every effort of the human reason to attain unto the knowledge of the Most High is dashed to pieces. For the God of Reason can never be *Most High*, seeing that no matter how *high* He becomes, He is always *one* with the thinker, who, therefore, thinks his thoughts alone.

No one, I think, has seen more deeply and more clearly into the essential pathos of philosophy and the philosophic tradition than Emil Brunner. It is to him that the point of view taken here is indebted. He writes:

Es ist Kierkegaard gewesen, . . . der . . . den merkwuerdigen Satz fasste, dass jedes System . . . als solches pantheistisch . . . sei. Damit ist in allgemeiner Weise der Ort bezeichnet an dem wir stehen. . . .[5]

Jedes System ist aus einer monistischen Grundueberzeugung herausgeboren. (Es)[6]*—hat das Vertrauen, dass*

das Denken und das heisst das menschliche Denken, zum Grund, zur Einheit aller Dinge vorzudringen vermoege, dass also diese Einheit letztlich in seinem eigenen Denken vorhanden sein muesse; seinem Gedanken erschliesst sich der Sinn und Zusammenhang der Welt. In seinem Denken hat er den unfehlbaren, weil von nichts als vom richtigen Denken abhaengenden Zugang zu jener Einheit oder jenem Grund oder jener letzten Ursache, die er Gott nennt. In seinem Denken verfuegt er nicht nur ueber die Gottesidee; sondern eben weil er das kann, ist er letzten Endes, in der letzten Tiefe seines Geistes mit jenem Urgrund identisch. Das ist die mystische oder pantheistische Grundlage jedes Systems.[7]

Wir sagen dasselbe mit dem Satz, dass jedes System ein Monolog des Denkers mit sich selbst sei. . . . Gerade das, dieses es sich nicht sagen lassen muessen, sondern es sich selbst sagen koennen, ist das Wesen der Vernunft, mit der alle Philosophie arbeitet.[8]

Thus, in a certain fundamental sense the history of philosophy is the history of pantheism unaware of itself. It remained for the eighteenth century to bring *enlightenment* to this point also. The real apostle of natural religion dwelt aloof from the turbulent stream of its development. But it was he who sanctified the dominant tendencies of the age, by proclaiming to the world the *amor intellectualis dei*, the love of that God, the full proof of whose existence "depends on the existence of something finite."[9] Among the several distinctions mentioned above in the relations between God and man behind which this pantheism lurks, one was omitted. It was the distinction between *Creator* and *Creature*. Perhaps nothing better attests what Spinoza and his less thoroughgoing contemporaries were wanting

to say than this. When *MAN* is writ large over the tapestry of time, the order of creation has become chaotic and the Creator has become obscured. And perhaps too, it is this very obscurity which lends a certain wistfulness to the impasse in which Hume found himself at the close of his philosophic labors. "To be a philosophical skeptic," he wrote in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, "is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step toward being a sound believing Christian."[10] Although Hume could not take this step himself, he could at least remind posterity that the preparation for it consisted in leaving all philosophy with its inherently pantheistic tendencies behind.

B. The Significance of Barth's Anthropology

The exclusion of every independent anthropological sentence from theology is a principle which finds increasingly rigorous application in Barth's developing thought. This is the meaning of his present dissatisfaction with much that stands in the two editions of the *Roemerbrief*. What remarkably human books they are! All the eschatology that is in them has not muffled the soul-stirring outcry of a man who is dimly aware that God has laid hold on him and is somehow trying to make sense of this unfamiliar situation. He who reads, finds himself inevitably responding to this talk of man with man, about God to be sure, but nevertheless, earnestly as man to man. "Paul, as a child of his time, spoke to his contemporaries." How else would a man begin a book in which he is going to assume that Paul is correct and face the con-

sequences? If he were writing Dogmatics instead of Exegesis, if he were lecturing in Systematic Theology instead of preaching, he could well begin with a paragraph about man. But this is also the meaning of his very different way of beginning, when, four years after the second edition of the *Roemerbrief*, he publishes an improved edition of the *Dogmatik*. This is the reason why he could no longer say the same thing in the same way that he had once said it, dogmatically, in 1927. The doctrine of the Word of God in the first edition of the *Dogmatik* simply was not sufficiently secured against anthropological misinterpretations.[1]

The revised *Dogmatik* is a deliberate attempt to correct any basis for such misunderstanding to which the *Roemerbrief* and the first *Dogmatik* could have contributed. By an independent anthropological sentence, Barth means a sentence in which it is expressed or implied that in the relations between man and God, "revelation in the narrower and real sense of the word, is preceded by the idea of an already given revelation of God, given with our created existence as such."[2] What is to be noted is, that this definition is not provoked by any merely natural theology in its obvious Thomistic or less obvious Augustinian forms. But Barth is here opposing the least obvious form of it that one could imagine. This definition appears in a critical rejection of Gogarten's doctrine of *Schoepfungsordnungen*, of Bultmann's conception of *Vorverstaendnis*, and of Emil Brunner's attempt to make use of both of these ideas.[3] That is to say, Barth is pressing the trend of his thinking so explicitly

and so far, that he is isolating himself from those who are spiritually closest of kin to him, and who, ten, even five, years ago would have been credited with an opposition to natural theology that was as radical as Barth's own. The words with which Barth parts company with Gogarten (and Bultmann and Brunner too) are so forceful and so significant for the latest stage of his thinking that a few of them deserve citation:

Natural Theology . . . is a possible undertaking in the domain of Catholicism because it presupposes God's being revealed in our being created (das Offenbarsein Gottes in unserem Geschaffensein), the creation of man, which is simultaneously the revelation of God, is, somehow or other, presumably in that it is confirmed by the Gospel, presupposed as directly understandable by us. This direct understanding of the original relations between God and man, the insight into the creation of man, which as such is also the revelation of God is, however, deprived us by the Fall, at least according to the presuppositions of the Reformation as to the extent of sin, and only given again in the Gospel, in the *revelatio specialis*. . . . There is, of course, a theological anthropology, but it will consist neither, as Gogarten perhaps originally imagined, in an explanation and application of christological sentences, not in an analysis of the creatureliness of man that is also the revelation of God, which is, nevertheless still possible in spite of the Fall, but simply in the exposition of the *status integritatis* described by the Word of God itself and disclosed in Jesus Christ as well as the more actual *status corruptionis* of man, an exposition which surely cannot serve the purpose of making intelligible any possibilities "from man outward" (Gogarten's phrase)[4] toward God, but has for its content rather more the isolation

of man over against God, about which it is as little possible to come to an understanding with any philosopher (one of Gogarten's expressed desires) as with any other dogmatic locus. . . .[5]

In the light of these considerations, I must not only reject the invitation of Gogarten to improve my Dogmatics by the inclusion of a "real anthropology," but also purge it of anything that, in my edition of five years ago, could appear as a concession in this direction.[6]

It looks as though Gogarten, and Bultmann and Brunner must suffer too the condemnation of Augustinianism already noted in chapter seven above.

The same steady direction of his thinking may be remarked when Barth comes to discuss the conception of *Law* under the category of *Command*. It is well to call attention to it not merely as another illustration of the movement of his thought but as illuminating the essential meaning of the conception itself. That this is a legalism of a different sort from that against which Ritschl is protesting should be obvious.

It is the view of *Law* adopted in the *Roemerbrief*[7] that Barth would no longer take in quite the same way. The reason is not so much to be found in a direct polemic against natural theology but in the inner logic of the rigorous doctrine of revelation itself. The *Roemerbrief* in both editions begins with the description of the world of man, of time, and of things, as the world of darkness and sin and guilt because "the sense for the specific with respect to God has been lost";[8] because "we are for ourselves what God must be for us," and so, "God is no more than we are ourselves";[9] because "in the conscious-

ness of man the distinction is obliterated between the eternity, originality, superiority of God, and the temporality, relativity, dependence of things."[10] Within this "sphere of wrath," there is divine revelation, as "a knocking of the distant God."[11] But there is divine revelation, as "an impression left behind by divine revelation in time, in history, in the life of man."[12] This is the *Law*. It is the affirmation, "I am the Lord,"[13] and just as such the source of the confusion, the ambiguity, the crisis which makes up the world of darkness. It is the source, because apart from this affirmation, it is impossible that its negation, that man's rebellion against the Lord, should become manifest. And as the affirmation that overcomes man's rebellion by making it acute, that checks the stubborn selfishness of sin, it can only appear as the instrument of divine wrath. But "the law is not revelation itself, but its very worldly-conditioned negative impression."[14]

Now the line of thought which proceeds from a view of the Law as *revelation*, to a view of it as an *impression of revelation*, to a view of it as *revealed command*—is the result of Barth's narrowing doctrine of revelation. The element of command is not absent from the first two stages any more than the element of revelation is. There is always an implied rejection of natural theology.[15] God's Law expressed as God's *present command* is Barth's way of saying the same thing he once said but not as he once said it. A distinction like that between *revelation* and the *impression of revelation* has the suggestion of a movement from Law to Gospel, which is just that slight weakening of the emphasis upon the grace of God as

primus agens in divine-human relations, which Barth is increasingly concerned to avoid. In the light of the discontinuity between the divine and the human spirit, of the existential character of divine grace, "one cannot, in what is now to be said about the coming of the grace of God (Zueignung der Gnade) to sinful man, depart from this Reformation insight a hair's breadth."[16] The inner logic of Barth's doctrine of revelation compels the removal of every trace of such a movement *from* Law to Gospel. The grace of God is God's dynamic, from-moment-to-moment, total act. It is promise *and* command. And the meaning of Barth's conception of the *Law* as God's *present command* is that it guarantees this existentiality.

C. *Karl Barth and the German Confessional Church*

Some comprehension of the complexity of the task of an adequately dialectical interpretation of the relations between God and man and the world may be derived from a brief review of Barth's part in the current struggle of the German Confessional Church.

The Confessional Church is that minority body of pastors and congregations which believes that the nature and function of the church as laid down in the Bible and in the symbolical books of the Reformation prohibit neutrality, amelioration, and compromise with the totalitarian aims of the National Socialist State. The so-called Young Reformers and German Christians[1] are thus sharply divided from the Confessional movement because of their respective programs of mediation with and acceptance of the new state of things in the Third Reich.

Already in the spring of 1933, with Hitler's accession to power, Karl Barth was preparing manifestos setting forth the principles and procedures of the church. They expressed the cardinal confessional position. According to this view, the church is the Body of Christ. This means that it is not a racial, or national, or even an indiscriminate religious community, but the community of those who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the church and the world and accept the task imposed upon this community by him. As the Body of Christ, the church has religious orders and administrative duties of its own. It must, therefore, not only continue in the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments but also perform the administrative tasks of instructing the youth, caring for the needy, and safeguarding its own discipline and government. Any interference with these offices or any attack upon the members of this body must be resisted by the whole body as an intolerable violation of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, the head of the body. The contention of the German Christians that the primary responsibility of the church is the nurture of the religious feeling of the German soul and the willingness of the amelioristically inclined orthodox Lutherans and Reformed to turn over to the State, as political, all matters of ecclesiastical administration so long as the formalities of the pulpit and the altar are unhampered, are as much a violation of the body of Christ as the avowed paganism of National Socialism. When, as during the war crisis of September, 1938, a prayer for peace, including also an intercession for the enemy, was forbidden to the Confessional churches as a

political act, it becomes plain not only that the line between religion and politics is precariously thin but also that the attempt to preserve a formal distinction between religion and politics is spiritual self-deception. The task which is imposed on the church by the Lord of the church is the single, and yet immensely complicated, one of hearing and obeying his sovereign Word of power and of life, as, and when it is spoken to every human situation.

Now the early manifestos of the church which were prepared under Barth's vigorous and courageous leadership are remarkable evidences of the unmonastic situation in the midst of which Barth has been working.[2] But since these declarations were directly concerned with the question of the nature of the church and only indirectly with the question of its function, it was possible for Barth to continue the exclusively theological direction of his thinking without perceiving the undialectical isolation of the divine command from the situation of human obedience. Theoretical consistency with respect to the doctrine of the Word of God has involved him in a theological inconsistency with respect to the dialectical analysis of the relations between God and man and the world.

Events have changed again, radically and rapidly. And they have brought to light a radically different confirmation of the criticism of Barth expressed above.[3] Czechoslovakia has become a German protectorate. The distinguished colleague and disciple of Barth in the theological faculty of the University at Prague, Professor Hromadka, has become an exile. And Karl Barth has become the author of a celebrated letter to Dr. Hro-

madka and of a more extended volume on church and state which reflect unmistakably the influence of events. The letter to Dr. Hromadka urges the resistance of the Czech army to German invasion as a battle for Jesus Christ. The monograph on the church and the state undertakes to commit the body of Christ to a virtual crusade against the tyrants in Berlin.[4]

This counsel means that Barth is continuing the undialectical tendencies which latterly have crept into his theological thought with one significant difference: the starting point is anthropological. The concern for the strictly consequential exposition of the doctrine of the sovereign Word of God has been replaced momentarily by the concern for a critical human situation (demonic, to be sure, but nevertheless, human). Barth's earliest and constant critics, particularly among American theologians, will happily have been confounded by this development. It simply has not been true that Barth's theological emphasis has been indifferent to historical affairs. He has always regarded the integrity of the Christian gospel as his primary responsibility, and rightly so. Since he had to reaffirm this gospel for a decadent church, careless of its responsibility toward a disintegrating society, he cannot be reproached for having looked upon the task of political and social reconstruction as belonging to others. Too much emphasis cannot be placed upon the fact that Barth's has been the loudest and loneliest voice in the wilderness of German totalitarianism preparing the way of the Lord. His own rediscovery of the task of theology and his faith-

fulness to that task have preceded his stubborn resistance to German neo-paganism.[5]

And yet, if there is any validity to the thesis of the foregoing pages, Barth would scarcely have been a Protestant theologian at all, if his dialectical appraisal of the relations between God and man and the world would have been entirely free from undialectical tendencies. The fact that he has succumbed to them first from the side of God, most recently from the side of man, only proves the necessity of a dialectical theology and the immense difficulty of articulating and maintaining it.

The leaders of the Confessional Church have seen in Barth's *call to a crusade* too unqualified an identification of the command of God with a given human situation. The Czechoslovakian letter was very embarrassing to them. But neither out of a spirit of retaliation, nor out of ingratitude for Barth's high service to their movement, have they dissociated themselves from its appeal. They regard the recommendation of an unequivocal resistance to the powers that be as based upon a faulty exegesis of the biblical conception of authority. In terms that are disquietingly reminiscent of orthodox Lutheranism, the Confessional synod insists that the powers that be belong to the order of creation and that over against the profanation of this order by proud and wicked men, the Body of Christ has only one possibility, namely, to suffer obediently, as Christ also suffered, for Christ's sake. This is the only way by which the order of redemption breaks through.[6]

An appraisal of the dialectical validity of the Confessional position is, of course, premature. But one more

convolution would be added to the already intricate course of Protestant thought, if it should develop that in withstanding Karl Barth, whose inspiration and leadership had guided it in the initial phases of a critical moment in Christian history, the German Confessional Church should itself lead the way toward an adequately dialectical and dynamic Protestant theology. May this prospect prove to be not only fascinating but fruitful!

Notes and References

Chapter One

[1] A recent discussion by Professor Edwin E. Aubrey of the Divinity School in the University of Chicago has given concreteness to this possibility (cf. the article in *Christendom*, Volume III, Number 2, "The Promise of American Theology," pp. 177 ff.).

But the suggestion that "Mark Twain, Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser; . . . Walter Lippmann and Joseph Wood Krutch" have told us already "the worst that Paul, Augustine and Calvin could offer" (p. 185), is more like theological provincialism than promising theology. Professor Aubrey's creed of development and confidence in our "far more realistic sociology . . . than anywhere in the world" are not evidences of theological maturity because coupled with "the Puritan tradition," "Yankee shrewdness," and the "Civil War" (p. 185). Perhaps when our own disintegrating economy shall have taken ruthless—even though peculiarly American—political forms, "the buffer generation" for which he is grateful, will not so reassuringly "hold the balance and absorb the shocks of human conduct" (p. 182). Perhaps, we shall then have grown up sufficiently to understand that our adolescent experimentalism must give place to an "eschatological framework" that is not the metaphysical prototype of "the abyss of European political chaos" (p. 182), or even an American one. That framework must be supplied by the New Testament idea of the Kingdom of God. The catastrophic note in that idea ought to direct theological thinking to take another point of departure than one derived

from the flux of secular processes, however instructive they may be.

It is only fair to Professor Aubrey, however, to record that his article has evidently been a part of a more extended formulation of his thought on these matters. The little volume subsequently published (*Living the Christian Faith*, New York, 1939) modifies considerably the enthusiasm of the briefer writing. Walter Lippmann and Mark Twain seem to find a more tempered place in the opening chapter (p. 20), while the "far more realistic sociology" of the article becomes "more realistic social analysis" in the concluding paragraph of the book (p. 118). But the direction of what he wishes to say is the same, and the article reveals more strikingly than the guarded discussion of the book what kind of a theology is possible when the theologian is concerned about "the social communication of Christian experience" in which theology originates, and about "the social experience of Christian people" in which "this communication finds both its terminology and its pertinence" (p. 117). This kind of theological thinking never has and never can fashion a creed. And without a creed, how shall there be a church? And without a church, how shall there be preaching? And without preaching, how shall men hear and heed the gospel in which "the company of the apostles and martyrs and saints . . . in the midst of life—our sort of human life—have found God and sought to do his will" (p. 118)?

[2] Paul Althaus, *Dogmatik, II*, Erlangen, 1932, p. 154.

[3] Perhaps, it should go without saying, that correct Christian *thinking* is but indirectly related to a man's being or not being a *Christian*. But one of the unhappy fruits of the overstress, especially in the circles of liberal theologians, upon the distinction between *doctrine* and *life*, is the sentimental notion that the denial of the adjective

christian to a man's theology is equivalent to barring him from the Kingdom of God.

The Scriptures, to be sure, supply their own sufficient ground for caution about depopulating heaven of heretics. Nevertheless, one suspects, that a church that is so alive *to* heresy that it becomes her intense concern lest she be alive *with* heresy, is more sensitive to her mission as the stewardess of the *means of grace* on earth than a church that can no longer call heresy by name because she has become so zealous for *good will* as to imagine that apostasy is no longer real or significant. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).

A theology can be *christian* or *unchristian*. Otherwise the Holy Spirit is not active in the church. But this has nothing to do with the character of the theologian or with the judgment of God upon him except to disclose the curse under which all theological thinking is necessarily done. A theology that is serious about the word of God is in the predicament of having to speak the *word* of God, and yet otherwise than as the word of *God*. Precisely because this predicament is so precarious, the church must *face* it, not *reinterpret* it. This is her immediate theological responsibility.

[4] A. C. McGiffert, *The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, New York, 1929, p. 17.

[5] J. G. Hibben, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, New York, 1910, p. 3.

Chapter Two

[1] W. R. Sorley, *A History of English Philosophy*, New York, 1921, p. 41.

[2] John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind*, Boston, 1926, p. 282.

[3] A. Ritschl, *Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung*, zweite Auflage, Band I, Bonn, 1882, p. 356.

[4] John Baillie, *The Interpretation of Religion*, New York, 1933, p. 73.

[5] A. C. McGiffert, *Protestant Thought Before Kant*, New York, 1926, p. 195.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[7] W. R. Sorley, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

[9] A. C. McGiffert, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-98.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

[12] Tindal's well-known work, published in 1730, bore this very title. It was called *Christianity as Old as Creation; or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature.*

[13] A. C. McGiffert, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[15] A. C. McGiffert, *The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas*, pp. 22-23.

[16] J. G. Hibben, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 95.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 276.

[18] *Vide infra*, Appendix A.

Chapter Three

[1] David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, edited with an introduction by Norman Kemp Smith, Oxford, 1935, pp. 281-82.

[2] Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason," from *Selections* by Theodore M. Greene, New York, 1929, p. 22.

[3] Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Judgment," from *Selections* by Theodore M. Greene, p. 520.

[4] T. K. Abbott, *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, 6th edition, New York, 1923, p. 260.

[5] John Baillie, *The Interpretation of Religion*, p. 262.

[6] Immanuel Kant, *op cit.*, p. 502.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 519, 502.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 512.

[9] T. K. Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

[10] Immanuel Kant, "Opus Posthumum," from *Selections* by Theodore M. Greene, pp. 371-72.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 373.

[12] D. F. Schleiermacher, *Reden Ueber die Religion*, vierte Auflage, Berlin, 1831, p. 44. Just how subjectively Schleiermacher understood religion is strikingly indicated by the fact that in the original edition of 1799 (p. 52) the word *Religion* is used and is replaced in the later edition by the more intimate word *Froemmigkeit*.

[13] D. F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, Mackintosh translation, Edinburgh, 1928, p. 12.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[15] D. F. Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube*, Band I, Berlin, 1821, p. 2.

[16] D. F. Schleiermacher, *Reden Ueber die Religion*, pp. 104, 63.

[17] J. Loewenberg, *Hegel, Selections*, New York, 1929, p. xi.

[18] G. F. Hegel, "The Philosophy of Mind," from *Selections* by J. Loewenberg, pp. 288-89.

[19] Quoted by John Baillie, *op cit.*, p. 194.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

[21] G. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, translated with an introduction by J. B. Baillie, New York, 1931, pp. 81, 85-86.

Chapter Four

[1] A. Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, Mackintosh translation, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[3] Exegetical and historico-theological usage combines with Ritschl's own to make the terms *justification* and *forgiveness* interchangeable. Although Ritschl employs the former more widely and more specifically, the latter will be adopted in the citations that follow in so far as the requirements of the present context involve no essential modification of those of the original.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[5] A. E. Garvie, *The Ritschlian Theology*, Edinburgh, 1899, p. 245.

[6] A. Ritschl, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 222.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 503.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 445.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 442.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 446.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 443.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 449.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 460.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 450.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 547.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Chapter Five

[1] O. Ritschl, *Albrecht Ritschls Leben*, Band I, Freiburg, 1892, pp. 49-50.
[2] Cf. *Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung*, zweite Auflage, Band I, paragraph 70, pp. 577-87.
[3] O. Ritschl, *op. cit.*, p. 227.
[4] Ritschl informs us that "Schleiermacher analyzes all the relevant relationships within the framework of the subjective life. Thus, with regard to method, he is my predecessor; I have also partially learned my method from him. . . ." (Cf. *Theologie und Metaphysik*, dritte Auflage, Goettingen, 1902, p. 81.)
[5] O. Ritschl, *Albrecht Ritschls Leben*, Band II, Freiburg, 1896, p. 187.
[6] A. Ritschl, *Rechtfertigung und Versoehnung*, zweite Auflage, Band I, p. 431.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 443.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 448.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 453.
[10] A. Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, Mackintosh translation, pp. 215, 224.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 223.
[12] O. Ritschl, *Albrecht Ritschls Leben*, Band I, p. 347.
[13] A. Ritschl, *op cit.*, pp. 34-35.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 344.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 329.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 349.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 349.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 377.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 335.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 377.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 378.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 442.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 465.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 442.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 465.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 226 n.
[28] A. Ritschl, *Theologie und Metaphysik*, dritte Auflage, combined with *die christliche Vollkommenheit*, Goettingen, 1902, p. 66.

Chapter Six

[1] I.e., the first edition of the *Prolegomena* to Barth's dogmatics.
[2] Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes: Prolegomena zur kirchlichen Dogmatik*, Muenchen, 1932, p. viii.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 252.
[5] Cf. *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, Muenchen, 1928: "das Wort in der Theologie von Schleiermacher bis Ritschl," pp. 190-211; and "Schleiermacher," pp. 136-189. The former address was delivered in October, 1927; the latter is a part of the lectures delivered in the University at Muenster during the summer semester, 1926.
[6] Karl Barth, *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, p. 190.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 191.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 152.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 144.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[22] For example, "the great and the small, the strong and the weak, joy and sorrow, the part and the whole . . . spiritual and physical well-being, the world within and without, receptivity and spontaneity, the human spirit and the holy spirit, finally also, human sin and divine grace." (*Ibid.*, pp. 146-47.)
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[25] I.e., being *between* Reason and Nature, rational and empirical Being; Knowledge *between* Ethics and Physics, ideal and real Knowledge; "the absolute Subject-Object *between* the highest Knowledge in its identity with the highest Being." (*Ibid.*, p. 148.)
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
[30] Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes: Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik*, Muenchen, 1927, pp. 1-3.
[31] Walter Lowrie, *Our Concern with the Theology of Crisis*, Boston, 1932, pp. 43-44.
[32] Karl Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 456.
[33] Walter Lowrie, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[36] Karl Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 457.
[37] Karl Barth, *Der Roemerbrief, zweite bis fuenfte Auflage*, Muenchen, 1929, p. 5.
[38] Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes: Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik*, pp. 67, 71.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 68.
[40] Karl Barth, *Der Roemerbrief*, p. 179.

Chapter Seven

[1] Karl Barth, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung, Zwischen den Zeiten*, Muenchen, 1927, p. 282.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 283.
[3] Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes: Prolegomena zur kirchlichen Dogmatik*, p. 71.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[5] Since the church is constituted by the act of God's grace, what Barth says here can be taken as representing also his view of grace. This dynamic independence of grace is determined by its own nature.
[6] I.e., a guarantee to be merciful and forgiving. Although not expressed in the passage cited above, it is in this sense, I think, that the term *Zuwendung* is to be understood.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[8] Karl Barth, *Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist, Zwischen den Zeiten*, Beiheft Nr. 1, Muenchen, 1930, p. 43.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-46.
[11] A reference to Troeltsch, *The Christian Faith*, p. 343; quoted by Barth preceding the above citation to show the parallelism between modern Protestantism and Augustinianism.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.
[13] Karl Barth, *Der Roemerbrief*, p. 196.
[14] Karl Barth, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, pp. 284-85.
[15] Karl Barth, *Die Auferstehung der Toten*, zweite Auflage, Muenchen, 1926, p. 93.
[16] Karl Barth, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, p. 285.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[18] And yet, the unqualified use of the verb *to be*, would be equally misleading, for it is too intricately involved in the static theology of a large part of the Christian tradition, particularly in Catholicism. In the absence of a better word, therefore, it is, perhaps, a faithful rendering of Barth's meaning to think always of *have* as qualified by *are*, and vice versa.

[19] Karl Barth, *Der Roemerbrief*, p. 193.

[20] Cf. Luther's *Grosser Katechismus*, edited by D. Johannes Meyer, Leipzig, 1914, p. 105.

[21] Cf. Karl Barth, *Zur Lehre vom heiligen Geist*, pp. 83 f. Something of the same approach was indicated by Emil Brunner at Zuerich during the winter semester, 1932. Brunner is, of course, not responsible for this use of what I then heard.

[22] The fundamental place of this concept in Brunner's theological thought has now been definitely and brilliantly established in his volume on the doctrine of man. "Das auch der Unglaeubige," he writes, "nicht ohne Gottesbeziehung und eben darum verantwortlich sei und dass diese Verantwortlichkeit auch durch die radikalste Geltendmachung der schenkenden Gnade Gottes nicht ausser Kraft gesetzt, sondern im Gegenteil in Anspruch genommen werde: das ist der Grundgedanke meines Buches. . . ." (p. ix.) "Es ist also immer die Struktur des Menschseins vorausgesetzt, die ja, wie wir jetzt wissen . . . verantwortliches Sein, Sein in Entscheidung ist. . . . Genauer ist das Personmachende dieser Personstruktur, die *Verantwortlichkeit* . . . der Anknuepfungspunkt im engeren Sinne, und darum vollzieht sich der Akt der Anknuepfung des Predigers oder Seelsorgers im Aufsuchen des Punktes, wo der Hoerer im Sinn der Verantwortlichkeit oder gewissensmaessig 'anzutreffen' ist." (p. 551.) Cf. Emil Brunner, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, Berlin, 1937.

[23] Karl Barth, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, p. 286.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 287-89.

[25] Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translation by Douglas Horton, Boston, 1928, pp. 169-70; 168.

[26] *Vide infra*, Appendix B.

[27] Karl Barth, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, p. 287.

[28] Karl Barth, *Das Halten der Gebote*, *Zwischen den Zeiten*, Muenchen, 1927, p. 206.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 219-20.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

[40] Karl Barth, *Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, pp. 56-57.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-68.

[43] Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes: Prolegomena zur kirchlichen Dogmatik*, pp. 239-40.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

[46] Karl Barth, *Vom Christlichen Leben*, Muenchen, 1928, p. 8.

[47] Karl Barth, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, p. 294; *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, p. 378.

[48] Karl Barth, *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, p. 378.

[49] Karl Barth, *Der Roemerbrief*, p. 328.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[51] Karl Barth, *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*, Muenchen, 1924, pp. 86-89. In an effort to render Barth's thought somewhat more forcefully, I have undertaken my

own somewhat more direct translation instead of adopting here the admirable English version by Dr. Douglas Horton already cited above.

[52] Karl Barth, *Der Roemerbrief*, p. 185.
[53] Karl Barth, *Die Auferstehung der Toten*, p. 62.
[54] Karl Barth, *Der Roemerbrief*, pp. 186-87.
[55] Karl Barth, *Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, p. 94.
[56] Karl Barth, *Der Roemerbrief*, p. 182.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

Chapter Eight

[1] A. Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, Mackintosh translation, p. 30.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 168.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 456.
[4] Ibid., p. 406.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 279.
[6] Wilhelm Pauck, *Karl Barth, Prophet of a New Christianity?* New York, 1931, p. 215.
[7] E. C. Moore, *Christian Thought Since Kant*, New York, 1915, p. 10.
[8] Wilhelm Pauck, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
[9] E. C. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
[10] Whilhelm Pauck, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
[11] *Vide infra*, Appendix A.
[12] The immediate ground for Barth's decision to abandon his association with the well-known organ of the dialectical theology, namely, *Zwischen den Zeiten*, is of quite another sort. It lies in the recognition of the fact that the present tendencies of his thought have so isolated him from his former companions, E. Brunner, Fr. Gogarten, R. Bultmann, that he cannot permit himself to appear with them between the covers of the same publication. With this act, Barth has deliberately sounded the death knell of the dialectical theology and has gone his way alone. We must forego inquiry into the long and

interesting controversy that led up to this decision. But the fact that Barth has continued to write (along with E. Thurneysen, who is the only one of the original group of dialectical theologians to remain Barth's theological kinsman) under the title, *Theologische Existenz Heute*, together with the nature of what he has written under that title, provide a significant commentary on the deeper meaning of that which originally brought about his isolation. *Vide infra*, Appendix C, note 5.

[13] *Theologische Existenz Heute*, has by now concerned itself with a variety of theological problems. It is the early subtitles, however, which bear the most telling, if more polemical, relation to the point under consideration here. Number One, marks the initiation of the critical dialectical controversy and quite appropriately bears the same title as the series, "Theologische Existenz Heute." Number Fourteen, is perhaps second to it in significance both because it, too, is highly controversial and because it is directly aimed at Emil Brunner in an answer to an earlier attack by Brunner upon Barth. Brunner has called his monograph: *Natur und Gnade. Zum Gespraech mit Karl Barth*, 1934. Barth's reply is entitled: *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner*, 1934.

It is worth noting in passing that these two essays contain the best concise formulation of the central problem in contemporary theological debate. The issue between *natural* and *revealed* theology has not only divided the dialectical school from liberalism but against itself as well. The second half of Barth's revised *Dogmatik* which appeared in the spring of 1938 may be said to elaborate upon Barth's categorical rejection of natural theology foreshadowed in the first half (1932), whereas Brunner's more fully, and as he believes, more dialectically expounded views on the problem are available in his latest work, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch* already cited. *Vide supra*, Chapter VII, note 22. The volume also appears in translation under the title, *Man in Revolt*, New York,

1939. The limits of this essay require only such consideration of this critical controversy as shall help to clarify the direction in which Barth seems to be moving now.

[14] Karl Barth, *Theologische Existenz Heute*, Nr. 1, Muenchen, 1934, pp. 3-4.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[33] Karl Barth, *Theologische Existenz Heute*, Nr. 14, p. 7.

[34] Barth mentions specifically, the first edition of the *Dogmatik*, and the essay on "Church and Culture" in the second volume of his collected papers, *Die Theologie und die Kirche*, pp. 364-91.

[35] Karl Barth, *Theologische Existenz Heute*, Nr. 14, p. 8.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-61.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[48] Karl Barth, *Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, p. 50.
[49] Karl Barth, *Theologische Existenz Heute*, Nr. 14, p. 19.
[50] *Vide infra*, Appendix C.

Appendix

A

[1] John Wild, *Spinoza, Selections*, New York, 1930, pp. xxviii, xxvii.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. xxxix.
[3] J. G. Hibben, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, p. 277.
[4] John Baillie, *The Interpretation of Religion*, pp. 259 ff.
[5] Emil Brunner, *Gott und Mensch*, Tuebingen, 1930, p. 3.
[6] Parenthesis mine.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
[9] John Wild, *op. cit.*, p. xxix.
[10] David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, p. 282.

B

[1] Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes: Prolegomena zur kirchlichen Dogmatik*, pp. 128 ff.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[3] Cf. respectively, *Politische Ethik*, Vernunft und Of-

fenbarung, and *Das Gebot und Die Ordnungen* and "Die Frage nach dem Anknuepfungspunkt," *Zwischen den Zeiten*, Beiheft Nr. 2, 1932. For Barth's critique of these writings, compare the revised *Dogmatik*, pp. 128-36, against Gogarten and Bultmann; pp. 251-53, against Brunner.

[4] The English parenthetical insertions are mine.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[7] The first edition appeared in Bern, 1919; the second and subsequent editions, including the fifth and last, in Muenchen, 1929. Hereinafter, the first edition will be referred to as R; the fifth, as Rb.

[8] Karl Barth, Rb, p. 25.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[10] Karl Barth, R, p. 18.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[12] Karl Barth, Rb, p. 40.

[13] Karl Barth, R, p. 300.

[14] Karl Barth, Rb, p. 350.

[15] Although especially in R, there are frequent passages which tend in the opposite direction. For example:

> "Israel's Law and every pure ideal, and every audible truth of faith, are divine revelation" (p. 32).
>
> "Inexcusable is our false religion, for the works of the Creator speak to our reason about the 'eternal power' of the invisible God and protest therewith in advance against the idol worship by which we equate this power with finite and visible and derived powers" (p. 15).
>
> "The sense of security at being on God's side, the eagerness for education and proselyting are to be sure subjectively very ambiguous, but objectively thoroughly necessary and normal symptoms of a special operation of God at this stage of 'history.' The righteousness of God stands behind the Idealists" (p. 45).

Or even this from Rb, in which examples are less frequent:

> "Platonic wisdom has long ago recognized the Unconditioned as the source of all the Conditioned" (p. 22).

These passages are not intended as sentences of *natural theology*, I repeat, and need not be so regarded. But they do not reflect the strict conception of *revelatio specialis* that we have met in the rejection of Gogarten's anthropology in the revised *Dogmatik*. One cannot avoid being surprised by these sounds, no matter how cautiously one reads. They are reminiscent of a kind of *revelatio generalis*, even though the context in which they stand aims at a more rigorous teaching.

[16] Karl Barth, *Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, p. 68.

C

[1] *Vide supra*, pp. 180-82.

[2] *Vide supra*, p. 184.

[3] *Vide supra*, pp. 189-92.

[4] Cf. Karl Barth, *The Church and the Political Problem Today*, New York, 1939.

[5] Lest the lively controversy aroused by Barth's letter and the monograph on the relations between church and state contribute further to the willful misunderstanding of his thought, particularly among American theologians, it is worth while to emphasize that the defense and the critique of Barth implied here have another point of departure than that on the basis of which his theology has always been too eagerly dismissed. The problem may be illustrated by recalling what has been written by one of Barth's most sympathetic and severest American readers, himself of great theological competence.

Professor Reinhold Niebuhr says, concerning the matters under discussion above, that, "here again Barth, the

exponent of the dialectical theology, has proved himself to be not sufficiently dialectical. In all the years before this crisis his 'no' to the problem of culture and civilization was too unreserved, and in the hour of crisis his 'yes' is too unreserved." (*Radical Religion*, Volume 4, Number 1, p. 5.) With this judgment, the foregoing argument is in complete agreement. But when Professor Niebuhr anticipates his conclusion by observing that "nothing discredits Barth's major theological emphasis more than his complete abandonment of his primary thesis in the hour of crisis" (*ibid.*, p. 4) and that "the pamphlet is important because it really brings to an end what has been known as Barthianism; for Barthianism in its pure form declared political questions to be irrelevant to the gospel" (*op cit.*, Volume 4, Number 2, p. 3), he has gone too far. In doing so, however, he has raised the fundamental question: *to what has Barth been saying "no," and to what has Barth been saying "yes," and why?*

The answer is not, it seems to me, that Barth has always been saying "no" to history because of any "separation of the Gospel from fateful political and historical decisions which we as men must make" (*op cit.*, Volume 4, Number 1, p. 4) and is now suddenly saying "yes" to history in "his present identification of the Czech soldier with the liberty of the church of Christ" (*ibid.*, pp. 4-5). In this sense, Barth is still saying, "*no!*" And there has been no change in his thought and no end of Barthianism, if Barthianism means Barth and not his disciples. The only *end* of which one can properly speak has already occurred and for its own specific reason which has already been noted. (*Vide supra*, Chapter VIII, note 12.)

The sphere of Barth's "no" and "yes" is now, as it has always been, *theological* and not *historical*. The complete exclusion of anthropological considerations from theology which underlies Barth's controversy with Emil Brunner is not the same as the denial to history of the possibility of providing points of departure for theological think-

ing. This denial Barth still makes. On this point, he still says, "*no!*" And on this point, it is safe to predict, American theologians will never understand him until they begin where all theologians must begin, and where Barth *has begun*. The conception of the *Word of God* is still the beginning of correct theological thinking in Protestantism, the *Word* on which the Christian community in the world is grounded and by which the church lives in history. To this *Word* and this *Church*, Barth has always been and is now saying, "*yes!*"

The real change in Barth's thought has been one of emphasis, rather than of direction, and this is the ground of its undialectical character. The undialectical exclusion of anthropological considerations from theology has suddenly been abandoned for an undialectical acceptance of an anthropological crisis. Here are the really critical "no" and "yes" in Karl Barth's developing thought. The "yes" implied in the letter to Dr. Hromadka could have and should have been expressed as long ago as the revision of the dogmatic *Prolegomena*, when Barth came forward as a thinker of the *Church* instead of a merely *Christian* thinker, as in the earlier of the two works. The failure to say, "yes," at that time, is to be regretted, particularly since it was prevented by Barth's "no" to anthropology in theology. But that omission does not justify "the end of Barthianism" because Barth has in this sense at last said, "yes." The real shift in Barth's thought related not to the problem of the gospel and history but to the place of anthropological sentences in theology. And the real danger is that he will not abandon the undialectical "no" at this point in order that his "yes" to Czechoslovakia may be more than an undialectical anthropological affirmation.

If the heat of theological controversy does not drive Barth into a debate about theological consistency, it may be possible for him to insist that the fundamental direction of his theological thought has not changed while at

the same time admitting that he has altered the one-sided emphasis against a theological anthropology. His own monograph on the church and the state contains a clue to this possibility and its fruitful implications. The critical conception is *the Church* for the sake of whose theological integrity Barth has always rightly said, "no," to "historical decisions" and for the sake of whose life he now utters the "yes" which should have been heard long ago. The misleading dialectic between the gospel and history and the quarrel about natural theology, which Barth has really too vigorously repudiated against Brunner, can be abandoned for an adequately *theological dialectic*. This will mean that the tension between the *Law* and the *Gospel* which informed the vital thinking of the Protestant Reformers can be concretely affirmed in the critical tension between the *Church* and the *State* for which consecrated theologians and conscientious Christian statesmen are urgently in demand.

[6] For this very abbreviated account of the present position of the Confessional Synod, I am indebted to a lengthy and firsthand narrative which came to me while the manuscript was being prepared for publication from one of the ablest of the younger leaders in the most forthright group in the movement. For obvious reasons, his name must be withheld. A more complete and more historical estimate of the whole Confessional movement, its internal struggles as well as the persecution it is undergoing from without, is available in the *Friends of Europe* publications, 122 St. Stephen's House, Westminster, S.W. London. Especially worth consulting are Numbers 12: "Protestantism in the Totalitarian State"; 20: "Confessions: the Religious Conflict in Germany"; and 55: "The Protestant Opposition Movement in Germany." A good compact discussion is contained in the volume by the Dean of Chichester, A. S. Duncan-Jones: *The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Germany*, London, 1938.

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